

1. NEWS

The main reminder of this newsletter is that abstracts are just about due for the Australasian Personal Construct Conference this year in Bendigo. However we have been given an extension **until the end of March**.

Attending our biennial conference is an opportunity to meet with people whom you only know by name and pick their brains about their research and practice. We are particularly fortunate to have as the keynote speaker Bob Neimeyer, who will be doing a nationwide visit as Grief Educator of the year. Bob is a clinician at Memphis State University and is, among other things, editor of both the Journal of Constructivist Psychology and Death Studies. Two recent books have been published by the APA (see later in newsletter). I am including some information about abstracts and enrolments in this newsletter. More details were in the last newsletter and can be obtained from the conference website Bendigo is a very interesting town to visit, with its history of gold mining and famous pottery. Nowadays it also has good quality wineries.

Congratulations to Christopher Stevens who graduated with glowing reports on his PhD thesis, which is on the topic of insight. The thesis is largely theoretical, but has illustrative qualitative analyses, based on interviews with well-known Australian fiction writers. Hopefully you'll get to hear something about it in Bendigo.

With regard to committee membership one nomination has been received for president — Bill Warren. Bill is a multi-talented person, being trained as a clinical psychologist, educator, accountant, philosopher and lawyer (have I forgotten anything? That's just the things I **can** tell you about.). I've included a 'review' of his book later in the newsletter. He's also an experienced administrator, so we're fortunate he's agreed to take on the role, despite his many other commitments. But that still leaves the treasurer's position. Office bearers must be aps members. Any volunteers or suggestions?

2. NEW INTERNET-IONAL NEWSLETTER

I strongly recommend that people look at the new internet/international newsletter in Personal Construct Psychology. It is produced by Joern Scheer at the University of Giessen and has lots of information that is both useful and interesting. Joern has made it his hobby to develop wonderful websites. This one has links to most of the other websites dealing with PCP and associated software. So if you want to find out a bit more about PCP, want software to analyse data, want to put faces to names, and much more, this site is your best bet.

<http://www.med.uni-giessen.de/psychol/pcp/news.htm>

3. 9TH AUSTRALASIAN PERSONAL CONSTRUCT PSYCHOLOGY CONFERENCE IN BENDIGO

"Beyond the Y2K - Construing the Future"

Format of the Conference

There will be a plenary address given by an invited speaker (Professor Robert Neimeyer, Memphis, TN, USA), a "Philo Café" (hosted by A/P Bill Warren, Newcastle, NSW, Australia), presentations of submitted papers, symposia focussing on a variety of applications of Personal Construct Theory, poster presentations, and workshops where in-depth explorations of theoretical and practical aspects are facilitated.

Dates

The conference will begin in the afternoon of Monday, July 3rd, 2000, and will end after lunch on Wednesday, July 5th, 2000.

There will be a Conference Gala Dinner on Tuesday, 4th.

Conference Venue

The conference will be at the All Seasons International Hotel Conference Centre in Bendigo.

Registration

The deadline for "early bird" registration is March 31st, 2000. See Registration and Bookings.

CALL FOR PAPERS

Invitation to Submit Proposals

Participants are invited to submit proposals for paper presentations, workshops, symposia, posters etc. The following formats are recommended:

Papers and Symposia

The standard time slot available for presentation and discussion of papers will be 45 minutes altogether. However, it is also

possible to submit papers requiring 30 minutes (including discussion). Papers will be grouped into symposia as much as possible.

Participants may also suggest symposia comprising several papers.

Workshops

Workshops can comprise one or more 45 minute "units". The number of participants may be limited.

Demonstrations

These may present e. g. computer programmes, specific techniques, Internet uses, etc, and often require the use of technical facilities. In

this case, it should be mentioned with the submission.

Posters

There is an opportunity to present posters in the usual way.

Submissions

Please use the submission form provided at

<http://www.bendigo.latrobe.edu.au/health/hstud/pcp/Bendigo.html>

. Please print out the form and send a paper copy and a data file (on disk or as an email attachment) (please use a state-of-the-art word processor). Abstracts should be submitted before March 31, 2000 to:

Julie Ellis-Scheer, School of Health and Human Sciences, La Trobe University
Bendigo, Bendigo 3552.

Fax: 03 5444 7977 / email: J.Ellis@bendigo.latrobe.edu.au

4. NEW BOOKS PUBLISHED BY APA.

The details below are from the apa website.

Constructivism in Psychotherapy

Robert A. Neimeyer and Michael J. Mahoney

1999 436 Pages

Constructivism is compelling thinkers across disciplines to consider some of our most deeply held but perhaps limiting beliefs about human nature and the nature of change. Constructivism in Psychotherapy provides a broad introduction to the principles of constructivist theory (and a helpful glossary for newcomers) as well as an in-depth exploration of constructivist practice involving a wide range of clinical problems encountered in day-to-day practice.

Offering perspectives that encompass diversity and rapid social change while acknowledging the primacy of meaning, language, self-agency, and novel experience in response to such changes, the book presents a refreshing blend of high-level theory and experientially grounded practice. An international panel of established leaders as well as new voices in this emerging field offer compelling metaphors for self, science, and psychotherapy. Therapy as a problem-dissolving system, therapy as rebiography and narrative reconstruction, and therapy as a laboratory for personal experiments are a few of the metaphors explored.

Practical methods of working within these metaphors free practitioners to conceive of their work in new ways while continuing to practice in ways that have always served them well. For example, ideas from the groundbreaking chapter on termination can be easily integrated into the practice of cognitive-behavioral, humanistic, and systems-oriented therapists, to name just a few. As the population of elderly persons grows, many of many of these individuals will be more open to psychotherapy than those of previous generations. The creative views of this stage of life offered in *Constructivism in Psychotherapy* will be of interest to all who practice with clients across the life cycle.

The first comprehensive book on constructivist psychotherapy, this volume invites practitioners and other behavioral theorists to consider their work, their clients, and their profession in ways that will compel, surprise, and perhaps unsettle them--sure signs that the book provides the kind of "novel experience" that leads to constructive change.

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Constructions of Disorder : Meaning-Making

Frameworks for Psychotherapy

Edited by Robert A. Neimeyer and Jonathan D. Raskin

2000 344 Pages

This collection of articles from constructivist, narrative and social constructionist theorists and therapists describes alternatives to diagnoses and treatment that humanize the assessment process and allow for therapeutic change. This book focuses on the question of how psychotherapists can think of human distress in a way that gives direction to the course of therapy without stigmatizing or pathologizing their clients. The approaches in this volume emphasize the personal and social processes of language and meaning making in creating and resolving problems.

The authors focus on such techniques as the experiential exploration of the client's tacit processes of self-construction and the deconstruction of oppressive cultural discourses. The result is a book that explores the relevance of postmodern clinical theory and fleshes out emerging alternatives to diagnosis that are more personally viable, contextually sensitive, and ethically defensible.

On Practicing Postmodern Therapy in Modern Times-Robert A.
Neimeyer and Jonathan D. Raskin

The Construction of Disorder as Human Enterprise-Jonathan D. Raskin
and Adam M. Lewandowski

Core Ordering and Disorder Processes: A Constructive View of
Psychological Development-Michael J. Mahoney

The Order in Clinical "Disorder": Symptom Coherence in Depth
Oriented Brief Therapy-Bruce Ecker and Laurel Hulley

Experience, Explanation, and the Quest for Coherence-Giampiero
Arciero and Vittorio Guidano

Linguistic Ambiguity as a Diagnostic Tool-Jay S. Efran and Paul F.
Cook

Constructing and Deconstructing Transitive Diagnosis-Thomas J.
Johnson, David T. Pfenninger, and Reid E. Klion

Diagnosing Human Meaning Making: An Experiential Constructivist
Approach-Larry M. Leitner, April J. Faidley, and Mark A. Celetana

Narrative Disruptions in the Construction of Self-Robert A. Neimeyer

Resisting the Dominating Story: Toward a Deeper Understanding of
Narrative Therapy-Wendy Drewery, John Winslade, and Gerald Monk

Constructing Psychopathology from a Cognitive Narrative Perspective-
Oscar F. Goncalves, Yifaht Korman, and Lynne Angus

Discomforts of the Powerless: Feminist Constructions of Distress-
Laura S. Brown

Reconstructing Psychological Distress and Disorder from a Relational
Perspective: A Systemic Constructive-Developmental Framework-
Sandra Rigazio-DiGilio

From Disordering Discourse to Transformative Dialogue-Kenneth J.
Gergen and Sheila McNamee

Orders may be sent to American Psychological Association, Book Order Department,
P.O. Box 92984, Washington, DC 20090-2984, USA. See below for shipping
information.

E-mail for more information: <mailto:order@apa.org>

5. RECENT EDITIONS OF THE JOURNAL

Journal Of Constructivist Psychology

Volume 12, Number 4

October - December, 1999

Constructivism And The Creative Psychotherapist: A Special Issue Of The Journal Of
Constructivist Psychology

Creativity In Experiential Personal Construct Psychotherapy

L. M. Leitner; A. J. Faidley

Intuition And Creativity In Psychotherapy

Arthur C. Bohart

Creative Use Of Interpersonal Skills In Building A Therapeutic Alliance

Timothy Anderson; Benjamin M. Ogles; Andrew Weis

Metaphors And Meaning: Constructing The Creative Psychotherapist

Jonathan D. Raskin

Book Reviews

Journal Of Constructivist Psychology

Volume 13, Number 1

January, 2000

The Structural Quadrants Method: A New Approach To The
Assessment Of Construct System Complexity Via The Repertory Grid

Josep Gallifa; Luis Botella

Picturing Valuations In Affect Space: Comparison Of Two Methods Of

Ordination In Hermans' Self-Confrontation Method

Rolf Van Geel; Hubert De Mey; Maria Thissen-Pennings; Nol Bendermacher

Living Research: The Experience Of Researching Self, Other, And Discourse

Marie L. Hoskins

Value Assessment And Everyday Activities

James Horley

6. SOME COMMENTS ON BILL WARREN'S BOOK

by Chris Stevens and Beverly Walker.

I (Beverly) have been feeling guilty for some time because Bill's book Philosophical Dimensions of Personal Construct Psychology (London: Routledge) has been sitting

on my desk waiting to be reviewed for the newsletter. Chris had earlier sent some comments through so, while this is not exactly a review, it hopefully will give some flavour of two people's reactions, and perhaps entice a few more people to delve into it.

Both of us enjoyed reading the book, although at times it was hard going. It's the sort of book that you dip into and come back to again and again, rather than easily read straight through. There is too much to take in in one reading.

In a sense Bill has indulged himself with this book, and we are the beneficiaries. Here he has brought together his passions and interests (and indeed some of his *bete noires*), weaving them together into one argument, a summary statement of his intellectual life at this point in time. It is of course an argument that not everyone else can agree with, and in certain respects maybe follow, and this Warren acknowledges in his conclusion.

Of prime importance in this statement is his defence of the compatibility of Personal Construct theory and realism. This in turn distances PCP from social constructionism. The argument for realism is very strong, especially when the realism being embraced is not the 'straw man' versions usually trotted out (thus the more sophisticated Andersonian view he outlines). The link with pragmatism is pivotal. Those who argue against PCP as a realism have to contend with Kelly the pragmatist. In what sense can pragmatism not assume realism? None. All we need reject is objectivism. We don't need to embrace idealism and relativism.

Another general feature that distinguishes the book is that by delineating the complex range of complementary/competing philosophical positions Bill undercuts narrow (partisan?) attempts to criticise PCP based on the privileging of one's favourite philosophical position. This is a welcome attack for those of us at Wollongong, given that would seem to be the basis on which one of our colleagues, Nigel Mackay (JCP, 1997), has criticised PCP positions.

We were interested that it is constructive alternativism, rather than the fundamental postulate plus corollaries that he emphasises as the philosophical base of the theory. The postulate and corollaries make sense only within that theoretical position or metatheoretical point of view. Bill's book is aggressive yet tolerant; strident yet flexible - a good ad for constructive alternativism.

Perhaps the most exciting and strident theme of the book is its rebuttal of the criticisms of PCP by social constructionism (SC). There are many aspects that struck us, especially that SC positions attempt to propound a complete system - 'certain ultimates' (eg the power of language to create reality, to construct us). But Warren points out that in being able to theorise in this way the constructive monopoly or hegemony of social forces must have been construed by SC theorists, thus opening up the logical need for individual constructors, for some place for subjectivity, for the agency of the person in the construction of social reality (not seeing persons as merely a site where discourses coagulate). The parallel with the Marxist-Existentialist debate is apt and hinges on SC's unclear notions of cause (in what way does the social become internalised by the individual?) and also on the problems of relativism

inherent in the view that there is no role for objectivity given the arbitrariness of discourse.

Much more apt is Warren's image of the various complementary searchlights scanning the same territory. Again, perhaps the most important contribution of the book is the rehabilitation of the person as being something more than a mere cipher for impersonal social forces. "Social factors and forces, interests and influences do not somehow float around in the ether capturing unsuspecting individuals and exerting some mysterious control over them. (p. 67)

The chapter on the self undermines SC by the commonsense observation that SC theorists have become aware of their own construction or 'saturation' - thus undercutting the 'decentering' of the person and accentuating the importance of subjectivity in co-constructing meaning. The alternative is not individualism. Self can be seen as a relational process, one that implies a history of embodied interpersonal processes that are probably 'ontologically prior' to later more 'detachable' or private reflexive thought processes. Something fundamental, our experience, passions, hopes, physical awarenesses... these are given back some agentic role, some sense of dignity and integrity for the person as an essential ingredient of meaning making and the construction of social realities.

Exploring the egalitarian outlook of Kelly is another useful contribution. Specifying that the small 'd' democratic middle position Kelly took may not be either a spurious 'neutrality' nor a blindly ideological reflection of his own position in North American culture, but may represent a creative synthesis. For example, embodied in the experience cycle is the need for constant questioning and inquiry, for a type of grounded, always-at-stake living which is neither neutral or ideological. Rather it is committed and iconoclastic.

We found the chapter Structuralism and Beyond quite difficult. It was not immediately obvious to us as readers what its purpose is. Its coverage is stretched too thin for the uninitiated and it was hard to see the links and significance that Warren sees. This obviously bears on the issue of who the presumed audience for the book is? Philosophers? PCPers? Students?

Sometimes we thought Bill has tried to cover too much territory in the book (even though we liked the panoramic and integrative thrust of the work). At times he would come to conclusions and we couldn't tell whether it was our ignorance or his lack of development of his argument. It seems to us that at times the links he assumes to be obvious are not that obvious to us mere mortals. The identification of Social Constructionism as a social idealism, for example, is presented as a *fait accompli*... and we missed the connecting bits.

The main problem with the book, however, is its price — at least its price in Australian dollars. This I know was as much a shock to Bill as to anyone. However it's a book you need to order for your library so you can come back to it again and again to inform your understanding.