Finn Tschudi - Repertory Grid Analysis
Workshop Report

This is a brief report of the grid analysis workshop given by Finn Tschudi at the Clinical Psychology department of Barnet Health care in London on the 21st of January 2000.

Finn Tschudi is Professor of Psychology at Oslo University, Norway and is the author of the much used and respected "Flexigrid" programme for the analysis of repertory grids. The workshop was organised by Professor David Winter, head of clinical psychology for Barnet, London whose numerous publications in the field of P.C.P. include "Personal Construct Psychology in Clinical Practice", obligatory reading for any P.C.P. practitioner. It was supported by the Psychology Department of the University of Hertfordshire.

The workshop was well attended with 20 participants coming from as far afield as Coventry, Oxford and Devon and whose purposes in finding out about grid interpretation ranged from use in business employee selection to analysing factors affecting the stability and contentment of inpatient psychiatric patients undergoing constant observation due to risk of selfharm.

The workshop was divided into two sessions, the first, introductory, session taking place in the morning and the second, (advanced) session taking place in the afternoon.

During the morning session Professor Tschudi explained several fundamental points about grid use and interpretation. These included methods of construct elicitation (Triadic, Dyadic and conversational) and the fact that the grid and its derivatives can be used as an aid to therapeutic conversation with the client. As well as providing reasons for the client's current situation, it may, just as importantly, show the different possibilities open to the client, and raise questions about what areas can be usefully explored and where the client can "go". In addition he explained the meaning of, and rationale for, principal component analysis. This is the identification of clusters of constructs that are correlated and thus share common variance, the unification of these clusters into principal components and then the use of these principal components as a means of interpretation of the client's construct system. This representation is most usefully depicted through a graphical representation with the individual constructs and elements plotted on a graph with the first two components being the axes.

During the afternoon session Professor Tschudi went into more depth about some aspects of grid interpretation. Among these were how to derive indices of the tightness or looseness of construing of the client, the potential implications of extremes in this dimension for psychopathology, superordinacy and subordinacy. The problem of how many components it is useful to consider as being meaningful and its solutions via the "Skree Plot" the "elbow Theory" and the "Kaiser Coefficient" was also covered. One crucial area also discussed was a new programme that he has been developing over the last several years called "Multigrid". This programme allows a number of grids to be amalgamated together so that their common and average properties may be derived. This is particularly useful in the comparison of different groups of subjects so that their similarities and differences may be looked at. Dr. Tschudi has used this programme to derive the "consensus" grids of psychotherapists from different theoretical orientations to assist Dr. Winter and I in a research project investigating the opinions about the goals and processes of psychotherapy of therapists from different
persuasions. Many other topics were dealt with and a comprehensive list could be given but, instead of engaging in this superficial exercise, I feel that it might be more interesting to focus on two aspects of grid interpretation that Finn dealt with during this session that, I at least, found particularly interesting.

The first was that clients' knowledge or memory may reside at one of three levels of "consciousness". The first is that this knowledge is completely "conscious". The second is that it is just below consciousness and the third is that it is completely "unconscious". (Those readers acquainted with the field of depth psychology will obviously note the parallel here with Freud's first theoretical "construction" of the human psyche as conscious, preconscious and unconscious and Jung's tri-partite structure of consciousness, the personal unconscious and the collective unconscious). Finn's suggestion was that repertory grids and their analysis are most useful as an aid to raising information, knowledge or memory from the level of being just under consciousness to that of being conscious. If these forms overrepresentation are completely conscious then it is superfluous to pursue them. If they are completely unconscious then it is impossible or nearly impossible to integrate them into consciousness, but if they are just below consciousness then it is a worthy, useful and very possible exercise to try and raise them to consciousness. It is with this process that the repertory grid can prove extremely helpful. Of course Kelly did not make use of the terms "Consciousness" and "Unconscious", but he did have analogous concepts such as "levels of awareness". Similarly, he proposed that one of the goals of therapy was the raising into the verbal domain, or the dialectization, of pre-verbal constructs formed before the client's acquisition of language.

The second is to do with the potential meaning, or lack of meaning, in the axes of the graphical representation of the client's construct system. The first two principal components are used in this graph as the axes on which the constructs and elements are plotted. Finn said that it is a potential misunderstanding to assume that these axes have any intrinsic meaning. In some cases they might and in others they might not, in which case it would be misleading to try and interpret them. When they do not have a meaning their purpose is simply to provide a bi-dimensional Cartesian space in which to place the elements and constructs so that their relation to each other can be seen and the overall structure of the system be represented.

Just as worthy, if not more so, than a description of the content of the workshop, however, is a description of Finn himself. He is an inspirational character who is filled with a profound enthusiasm and love for his subject which is contagious. I had the privilege of sharing in a couple of meetings with him and Professor Winter where we discussed a mutual research project and it was incredible to hear him speak about P.C.P. with such vitality and see him scan pages and pages of computer output in a few seconds, instantly gleanig its intrinsic meaning. He has an incredible knowledge, memory and creative ability, suggesting at various points that he should write a new programme to analyse the data in a certain different way, recommending books and articles to read and quoting references with an amazing precision. At one point, having asked a question about the meaning of the axes on the repertory grid graph, he gave his answer and then referred me exactly to p.207 of a book he had last read in 1956 while doing his doctorate. We were lucky to share this brief amount of time with an inspirational man and a scientist of the truest kind both in Kelly's and the world's terms. A man inquiring purposefully into "The Inquiring Man".

Nick Gilbert