

Compare the views about the nature and development of Carl Rogers and George Kelly. To which of these therapists would you most likely recommend to an 18 year old friend, in need of counselling after a major life change?

Many consider the science of psychology an attempt to create a comprehensive theory of personality and therefore be able to explain why people are alike in some ways and different in others (Jourard, 1974). In so doing, varying schools of thought have evolved. Carl Rogers and George Kelly have been deemed by peers as having similar overall views regarding personality, but practicing different methods (Pervin, 1989). Their approaches to personality can be defined as humanistic, which describes the view of accepting the 'human qualities' of the individual; that man is born with an inherent potential for self-actualization (Hergenhahn & Olsen, 1999). Such an approach steers away from the idea that man is a robot, who is the total product of outside forces, as the Behaviourist would maintain; or that man simply results from the interaction of primal drives and the demands of community, a belief held by many Freudians. This paper will begin with a comparison of Kelly's and Rogers' theories of the nature and development of personality and will continue with a recommendation as to which therapist would be best suited to an 18 year old after a major life change. Rogers and Kelly are both well known figures in the field of humanistic psychology. Each independent theory is logical and applicable in varied circumstances and has had a tremendous impact on the theory of personality (Roazen, 1992). In an aim to draw similarities and contrasts of both theories and to provide an independent account on which theory appears most suitable, a critical evaluation of these two revolutionary Psychologists will be attempted.

To understand the many different theories of personality you must understand that personalities are unique. Everyone has different experiences, parents, and lives. These differences cause all people to view the world differently than the person next to them. There are various thoughts of how and when personalities develop and grow. Carl Rogers and George Kelly are two theorists who have influenced the understanding of the nature and development of personality (Pervin, 1989).

Carl Rogers originated client-centred therapy, which is based on the belief that individuals, rather than environment or subconscious drives, can control their choices and values and fulfil their own unique potential. Rogers' theory stresses that it is the individual's own comprehension of his or her experiences that is important, rather than the therapist's professional interpretation (Rogers, 1951).

Kelly founded what is known as the personal construct system. He suggested that our personal constructs reflect our constant efforts to make sense of our world, just as scientists make sense of their subject-matter; we observe, we draw conclusions about patterns of cause and effect, and we behave according to those conclusions (Kelly, 1963).

Both theories emerged at a time when psychotherapy was the most commonly practiced therapy technique. Kelly initially began his career using Freudian therapy, but felt it worked only because his clients believed it should. It was at this time when Kelly made an observation that was to have a profound influence on his later theory. He discovered that clients would accept even his most radical explanation for their problem and usually improve. He concluded that logic, or correctness, had little to do with it (Raskin, 2001).

Roger's theory was commonly described as the first major alternative to psychoanalysis (Pervin, 1989). He too began practicing with Freud's well known techniques, only to discover that essentially his theory was completely opposite than the view suggested by Freud. Rogers believed that humans are all basically good and need no controlling, whereas Freud viewed humans as having the same drives and motives as an animal which had to be controlled by society (Maddi, 1996). Both Rogers and Kelly considered Adler to be a strong influence within their personality theories and both joined the American Association of Humanistic Psychology. Because of Kelly's and Rogers' background in Humanistic Psychology, their views on motivation of the human personality were similar, as they felt the ultimate aim for an individual was to understand, predict and control their own behaviour (Jourard, 1974).

The prototype of a mentally healthy individual was seen on similar terms by Kelly and Rogers. They both named several similar characteristics that define a healthy personality.

Kelly proposed 11 corollaries to explain his structure on the nature and development of personality. Some of which include the organisation corollary; the belief that humans create a construct hierarchy which they use to anticipate future events, the dichotomy corollary; a belief that for every construct there has to be an exact opposite, and the commonality corollary; which is the belief that it is not common experiences that make people similar, only when they construe their experiences in similar ways. Kelly believed that mental health comes from an understanding and balance between an individuals' construct system (Adams-Webber, 2003). He took issue with the advice to be ones self and in fact believed the opposite, as he felt that individuals would be better off if they set out to be something other than what they are (Kelly, 1963). Rogers, on the other hand, proposed a process which he called self-actualisation. Mental health is therefore achieved when a client ultimately emerges as one's 'real' self (Jourard, 1974).

Another difference between them is their definition of personality. Rogers proposed that self and personality were in fact the same thing, whereas Kelly saw them as separate entities. These conflicting views had a major impact on their therapy techniques (Maddi, 1996). Kelly believed people continued to try new constructs in order to see which fits their idea of the future, and there was, for Kelly, no innately determined self, rather each individual invents his or her personality (Cromwell, 2003). Rogers differentiated between experience and awareness. Experience is all that is going on within an individual's environment which is potentially available to awareness. When these experiences become symbolised, they enter awareness and become part of the person's phenomenological field (Rogers, 1987).

One thing these theorists did agree on is the amount of time development of the personality can take. Rogers used non directive, client centred therapy, which is best described as an atmosphere provided by the therapist in which clients could gradually comprehend the nature of their own problems. Through this slow moving period, the client's phenomenological field becomes differentiated as the self (Rogers, 1959). For Kelly, psychotherapy provided a person with an opportunity to examine and reformulate his or her construct system which is similarly a lengthy process (Kelly, 1963).

Both Kelly and Rogers had to devise a way to test and assess each client's progress. Similarly, both tests have become extremely well known and are used commonly among therapists today. Kelly used what is known as the Role Construct Repertory Test, or the rep test, to identify the constructs clients use to construe the relevant people in their life. The purpose of the rep test was to assist the therapist in noting how clients construed themselves and their interactions with the world and with other people (Bannister, 2003). Rogers used what is known as the Q-sort technique to qualify the extent to which a client had changed as a function of therapy. In this technique, the client was asked to describe him or herself accurately, and the responses were interpreted as their 'real' self. They were then asked which characteristics they would like to possess, and these responses were labelled as their 'ideal' self. This way the therapist could examine the relationship between their clients' real and ideal self at the beginning, during and after the therapy (Rogers, 1973).

Another comparison that can be determined between Rogers and Kelly is their theory on motivation and anxiety. They have been described as adopting the 'jackass' theory of motivation which concerns the nature of the 'animal', not the forces that push it (Maddi, 1996). This understanding is quite dissimilar to both Freudian and Behaviourist techniques which believe in either the push or pull of outside forces to motivate humans and influence personality. Rogers and Kelly have very different points of view regarding anxiety. These differences tie in with their

theory on the nature of personality. Kelly believes that anxiety occurs when one cannot predict their future, or when their constructs become vague and unrecognisable. Rogers on the other hand, believes that one becomes anxious when a new situation does not meet with their ideals of self.

Both theorists provided the psychological community with many new definitions and solutions to the human personality (Jourard, 1974).

In regards to the question of which of these therapists would be most likely recommended to an 18 year old after a major life change, several factors need to be considered. Firstly, a critical approach to each of their techniques and theories; secondly, a look at their reputability and reliability and lastly, an individualistic approach of their separate techniques for this particular client.

Rogers believed in the emergence of the humanistic person of the future. He was first and foremost a therapist, with an abiding respect for the dignity of persons and an interest in persons as subjects rather than objects (Kirschenbaum, 2004). If this client suffers from what Rogers believes as inadequate conditions of worth, occurring when significant others in the person's world provide negative regard which the person then interjects, then his style of therapy would be ideal and the real self will have a chance to emerge.

This can become an issue as Rogers' conception of self is rather broad. He does describe a variation of self: the "ideal self" which denotes the self-concept the individual would most like to possess (Rogers, 1959), but other explicit variations are not offered.

Rogers may also chose the therapy technique of achieving self-actualisation for this particular client, which would involve the actualization of the clients' life changing situation, and how it is symbolized in the self (Rogers, 1959). While the idea of an actualizing tendency makes sense, Rogers never specified what some of the inherent capacities that maintain and enhance life might be (Maddi, 1996). Rogers' theory of personality and therapy techniques are commonly described as being too over simplistic and optimistic. It can be assumed that Rogers' belief of humans as basically good with an innate tendency towards self actualisation, can be described as only hopeful thinking (Winter, 1996). Another negative aspect to Rogers' theory is that certain characteristics of personality have been ignored, which could pose a problem to this particular client (Maddi, 1996). By dismissing the darker side of human nature, his technique could be seen as deficient and therapy with this client may not be complete.

Rogers did help illuminate the facet of human nature that was previously obscure. He successfully challenged psychology's other two dominant forces, behaviourism and psychoanalysis. His techniques have become extremely popular because they are effective,

and provide a positive approach to the human personality (Kirschenbaum, 2004). It appears that Carl Rogers cared about each client and was most interested in improving the human condition.

Kelly's view of personality is similar to that of a scientist, in the sense that an individual construes reality as only one of many possible ways. As Kelly's main goal was to describe and identify constructs in an individual's environment, then it seems that this particular client may benefit from his therapy, as a major life change provides a good opportunity for new constructs to arise. Kelly's theory is often described as cognitive, with the majority of its emphasis on the construction of thought (Jancowicz, 1987). Many people have mentioned this as their primary criticism of Kelly's theory, when in fact; Kelly disliked being called a cognitive theorist (Maddi, 1996). If in fact Kelly's theory is too focused on the cognition of personality, then his ability to solve many emotional problems may be restricted.

In comparison to Rogers, there has been limited empirical research on his theory of personal constructs. This may affect the client, as the theory remains relatively more or less as Kelly proposed it in 1955 (Jancowicz, 1987), and would be unlikely to include more recent developments in psychological research that may be imperative to his or her recovery.

Another problem that may arise out of therapy is Kelly's difficulty in predicting behaviour. For Kelly, construing was a private and creative process and construct systems are constantly revised (Kelly, 1964). These features of Kelly's theory make it practically impossible to predict what the client will do in a particular situation, and for other therapists to learn his technique. Kelly also left many unanswered questions on his theory of personality, such as why people have more construct systems available to them than others and what the origin of the personal construct is (Winter, 1996). Without this knowledge, it may be difficult for a therapist to understand and correctly diagnose this 18 year old client.

Kelly has also been criticised, as has Rogers, for his simplicity of the human personality (Maddi, 1996). He has in fact been accused of the exact opposite of Rogers, as Kelly has focused too much on the intellect of personality and little on emotions. As this client may be burdened with emotional issues, Kelly's therapy technique would be of little use.

Although Kelly has been accused of focusing too much on cognition, he has also been praised for doing just that (Jourard, 1974). Both psychoanalysis and behaviourists played down the importance of rational thought that Kelly made the cornerstone of his theory. His theory also has applied value and is used widely today within industrial/organisational settings (Jancowicz, 1987). This may prove to be beneficial for the client, as it seems Kelly's theory can be individually formulated to suit his or her situation. Starting with practically no formal training in

clinical psychology, George Kelly has developed a unique theory of personality and therapeutic procedures that were both innovative and effective.

It is important to understand any therapy technique or approach before undertaking treatment. Within these evaluations, it seems that for this particular client; an 18 year old who has just undergone a major life change, Rogers' style of therapy would be more suitable. The main reason for this is lack of attention that Kelly has received from his theory. Kelly can be described as being 20 years ahead of his time and only recently, with the so-called 'cognitive revolution', are people really ready to understand him (Jancowicz, 1987). Rogers's therapy techniques are well known and practised worldwide which indicates a common understanding and acceptance within the psychological community (Maddi, 1996).

Everyone has his or her own ideas on what the nature and development of personality is, but no one has a definite answer. These two theorists are correct in their views because no one can prove them wrong. Since there are so many variations in personality traits there will never be a definite answer. What may work for one person, may not necessarily work for the next. Carl Rogers and George Kelly have laid a foundation for personality theories and have offered relevant, alternative methods to psychotherapy (Pervin, 1989). Kelly provided an applicable description as to how humans perceive their environment and how this affects personality. Rogers offered an approach to therapy which emphasises the individuals' importance to achieve his or her ideal self. The surface proposals by each of these therapists are in fact quite similar, but when researched deeper, are actually very different. Each therapist must imagine what the world is like through the clients eyes and construct what they see as an answer to their problems. The client discussed in this paper would be more suited to the techniques of Carl Rogers. Rogers' pervasive interest in therapy is what clearly differentiates him from Kelly, despite some similarities in their ideas. Carl Rogers and George Kelly provided the psychological community with revolutionary theories on the nature and development of personality. There is no doubt that each theory will continue to inspire research into the future. As human beings and their nature evolves, so too will the personality theories that accompany them.

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