The application of the repertory grid in forensic practice

SCHOLARONE™
Manuscripts

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37
38
39
40
41
42
43
44
45
46
47
48
49
50
51
52
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60

The application of the repertory grid in forensic practice

R. Kitson-Boyce, R. Wheatley, N. Blagden

Dr Rosie Kitson-Boyce, Nottingham Trent University: rosie.kitsonboyce@ntu.ac.uk

Dr Rachael Wheatley, Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) Psychology Services: rachael.wheatley@justice.gov.uk

Dr Nicholas Blagden, Nottingham Trent University: nicholasblagden02@ntu.ac.uk

1

The application of the repertory grid in forensic practice

Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to demonstrate the utility of the repertory grid method with forensic populations. Three case studies are presented, each using an adapted variation of the repertory grid method with a different forensic clients: an individual maintaining their innocence, an individual convicted of sexual offenses, and an individual convicted of stalking. An analysis of the repertory grid findings is presented for each case study, including a Principal Component Analysis and a Self-Identity Plot. This analysis of subjective meaning and idiosyncratic belief systems proves invaluable ordinarily, but particularly when working with populations who present as suspicious and guarded in research or clinical settings. Relationship and offending-related psychological vulnerabilities are explored, with small psychological changes documented and the use of the repertory grid approach as a clinical tool is highlighted. The findings provide a significant contribution to the field of forensic practice, by demonstrating the utility of the repertory grid method when working with forensic populations. This may, in turn, contribute to researchers' and practitioners' consideration of its use within future forensic practice.

Introduction

Personal Construct Psychology (PCP: Kelly, 1955a) constitutes both personal construct theory, as well as an approach to research and practice. The epistemological assumption underlying this is the principle of constructive alternativism whereby the focus is on people's constructions of the world (Ashworth, 2003). This guiding philosophy views the real world as having many alternatives that people interpret in ways that make sense to them, thus explaining the rich diversity of human experience (Horley, 2008). Choice and personal agency are held as central concerns; we are active construers of our own experience, thus invoking the notion of will and will power (Horley, 2008).

According to PCP, to interpret the current situation and predict future experiences everyone develops a unique personal construct system, in which aspects of our environment can be appraised, and hypotheses tested (Kelly, 1955a). Our constructs are bipolar; two poles are created from the individuals' interpretations of their experiences of the world (Fransella, Bell, & Bannister, 2004). They are not all equal, instead, there is a complex hierarchy involving both superordinate and subordinate constructs, which are tested and refined through experience (Paget & Ellett, 2014). Subordinate constructs are implicit when superordinate constructs are applied (Horley, 2008). For example, if someone is construed as 'bad' then subordinate constructs of 'manipulative' and 'sly' may be implied.

An important dimension of PCP, relevant in all three case studies in this paper, is the loosening and tightening of constructs. Tightness alone is, arguably, maladaptive in a changing world and can be characterized by 'all or nothing' thinking (Houston, 1998; Winter, 1992). Consequently, reliance on tight construing may lead to unvarying, rigid predictions about the world (Winter, 1992). However, a weaving between loose and tight constructs forms a creativity cycle

3

whereby a loosening enables the individual to take on new concepts, that can then be tightened into a more definite viewpoint (Kelly, 1955a; Walker & Winter, 2007). This creativity cycle can be used to deal with a range of psychological difficulties and is prominent within the field of psychotherapy (Epting, Gemignani, & Cross, 2005; Winter, 2003). For example, Kelly (1955a) defines anxiety as the awareness that the events a person is confronted with lie mostly outside the range of convenience of their construct system. As humans we can respond, or be supported through therapy, to confront the unknown area so that we can bring it within the range of convenience of our construct system. Alternatively, however, we may withdraw from the area altogether, which involves constriction, or a narrowing of the perceptual field whereby invalidating events are ignored and revisions to our constructs postponed. This latter response can have problematic consequences concerning future risk of offense-related behavior.

The repertory grid

One of the main methodologies, and arguably the most popular, for understanding and assessing an individual's personal construct system is the repertory grid technique (Horley, 2008; Paget & Ellett, 2014). Indeed, a recent systematic analysis of repertory grid publications over the last 50 years highlighted how the use of the repertory grid technique remains strong, with over half of empirical papers using the technique being in the field of psychology (Saúl, Lopez-Gonzalez, Moreno-Pulido, Corbella, Compan, & Feixas, 2012). Derived from Kelly's (1955a) Role Construct Repertory Test, the repertory grid is essentially a structured interview, which helps the researcher to develop an understanding of the way a participant makes sense of their world and interprets their experiences (Fransella et al., 2004)

The basic repertory grid consists of a topic, elements, constructs, and ratings, which are used to allow a unique insight into the expectations the participants' construing leads to, with regard

to the world and the people within it (Fransella et al., 2004). Each grid is conducted in relation to a particular 'topic' whether it be for clinical practice or research uses (Jankowicz, 2004). Elements of the grid are examples of this topic, which, as Easterby-Smith (1980) states, should be homogenous and provide representative coverage of the area to be investigated. These usually take the form of people, with whom the participant has either a positive or negative relationship. The constructs used in a repertory grid can be defined as the participant's values-based interpretations of the elements supplied (Tan & Hunter, 2002).

The use of the repertory grid with forensic populations

Forensic applications of personal construct psychology are not new. For example, in 1988, Horley explored the differences in personal constructs between individuals diagnosed with a 'mental disorder' who had or had not committed a sexual offense against a child. In researching people who had committed rape, Shorts (1985) reported on therapy which had used a PCP approach to encourage an individual to look at discrepancies between his self and his ideal self. Since this time, Horley (2008) has dedicated decades to working with individuals convicted of sexual offenses from a Personal Construct approach, demonstrating how cognitive restructuring can be used with these individuals as a form of individual therapy.

The repertory grid technique has been used with forensic populations as a method of assessment, formulation, and measure of psychological change (Horley, 1996; Houston, 1998; Howells 1983). More recently, Mason (2003) used the repertory grid to aid assessment and formulation in an individual who had committed a sexual offense and was diagnosed with a learning disability. From this, it was concluded that repertory grids are less likely to be influenced by the socially desirable response sets often derived from more traditional psychometric methods of assessment used with forensic populations, particularly when used

5

with those with intellectual disabilities. Indeed, the Repertory Grid method differs from objective and often projective forensic psychology assessments (Horley, 2008), and enables analysis of subjective meaning and idiosyncratic belief systems (Turpin, Dallos, Owen & Thomas, 2009). The ability for the repertory grid to identify underlying patterns of participants' thinking is of particular use when working with forensic populations as issues relevant to their offending beliefs and behaviors can be explored (Blagden, Winder, Gregson, & Thorne, 2014). In addition, due to the level of detail the analysis can provide, small psychological changes in a participant's construct system can be identified, which may represent important progress in the rehabilitation of the individual (Mason, 2008).

Despite the continued presence within the literature, Saúl et al. (2012) argue that the pattern of psychological publications including repertory grids as a method is at a standstill. Concerning forensic populations specifically, Horley (2008) highlights how the existing research into the construct systems of those convicted of offenses, such as sexual offenses, is still in the preliminary stages. It is hoped therefore through discussing the use of repertory grids with different forensic populations, the benefits of this unique method can be illuminated. This may, in turn, contribute to researchers' and practitioners' consideration of its use within future forensic practice.

The current research

This paper presents three case studies, which aim to outline and highlight how the repertory grid can be utilized for different groups of individuals in forensic practice. For each case study, the constructs were elicited using either a triadic (case study 1 & 3) or a dyadic method (case study 2). The triadic method involved three elements being presented and the participant asked, "for you personally how are two alike but somehow different from the third? Alternatively, the

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37
38
39
40
41
42
43
44
45
46
47
48
49
50
51
52
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60

simpler dyadic method of elicitation involved two elements being presented to the participant, who was then asked to consider how they were similar or different from one another (Neimeyer, Bowman, & Saferstein, 2005; Shorts, 1985). Both these processes facilitate communication, and a laddering process was used, thus enabling other high order constructs to be elicited (Gaines-Hardison & Neimeyer, 2012). Following this, participants in all three case studies were asked to consider the contrasts of these constructs, representing the alternative of how they currently view the world and, therefore, the implicit pole of the construct (Walker & Winter, 2007). Finally, once the elements and constructs had been either supplied or elicited, the rating process was commenced, whereby participants were asked to quantitatively evaluate the degree to which each element could be characterized according to their own personal constructs (Borell, Espwall, Pryce & Brenner, 2003). Elements were rated against each pair of constructs using a 7-point Likert Scale, thus providing a meaningful rating scale for statistical analysis (Tan & Hunter, 2002).

To enable the analysis of the data, all three case studies involved the use of the computer program Idiogrid (see Grice, 2002). Programs such as these provide statistical analyses, which are argued to uncover the structural features of construing that manual analysis alone would fail to reveal (Mason, 2003). The measures used enabled the relationships between pairs of constructs, pairs of elements, and the relationship between a construct-element pair, to be assessed using a Pearson product-moment correlation (Grice, 2002).

An additional structural analysis used in each case study was the principal component analysis (PCA), which provides a graphical output of the participant's construal system. This output visually highlights the internal relationship between the people important in the participant's world (elements represented as points) and the way they understand and construe them

7

(constructs represented as lines from the origin) (Jankowicz, 2004). The tight or loose construing patterns, outlined earlier, were also observed here with an over-reliance on the first component interpreted as an indicator of a tightly organized construct system (Fransella, Bell, & Bannister, 2004; Winter, 2003). In addition, the percentage of variance accounted for by the first factor is the most widely used measure of cognitive complexity/differentiation (Smith, 2000), a high percentage indicating cognitive simplicity. Cognitive simplicity is often characterized by an 'all or nothing' thinking style (Houston, 1998) with high cognitive complexity characterized by an integrated and elaborated construct system (Fransella et al., 2004). Related to this is the extent to which a person can construe his or her social experiences from different points of view (García-Mieres, Ochoa, López-Carrilero, & Feixas, 2016), which was considered particularly in case study 1.

The final structural analysis used in two of the three case studies was the self-identity plot. This is a graphical method, which uses two elements to form a two-dimensional space (Norris & Makhlouf-Norris, 1976). The standardized Euclidean distances between the elements in the grid were plotted in this two-dimensional space, providing a summary of the relationships among the elements (Grice, 2002). In doing this, the self-identity plot highlighted the relationship between those elements the participants viewed as important and meaningful in their world and highlighted the way they construed the self and others.

The three case studies outlined are derived from research projects for which approval was obtained from both the Nottingham Trent University Research Ethics Committee and the Ministry of Justice National Research Committee. Research activities adhered to the British Psychological Society's guidelines regarding the ethical considerations of collecting data for

research purposes (BPS, 2018). For example, pseudonyms were provided for the participants

in all three of the case studies.

Case Study 1: Using the repertory grid to work with individuals who are maintaining their innocence

Background

Many treatment programs for incarcerated men with sexual convictions devote significant time

to overcoming denial and "accepting responsibility". In many jurisdictions around the world,

denial operates as an organizing principle of treatment and it remains a controversial issue for

forensic practice. However, some have argued that denial and 'accepting responsibility' should

not interfere with treatment as underlying risk factors, e.g. grievance thinking, lack of stable

trusting relationships and anti-sociality, can be targeted without them admitting guilt (see e.g.

Maruna & Mann, 2006; Ware & Mann, 2012). This has led some to argue that understanding

the individual in denial and how they construe their world is important for treatment

formulation for this group (see e.g. Blagden, Winder, Gregson, & Thorne, 2012).

This case study focuses on Stef, a 60-year-old man who was reincarcerated for breaking his

license conditions and is, therefore, serving the remaining two and a half years of his original

prison sentence. His index offense was sexual assault of his daughter. Stef had one previous

sexual conviction, which was for underage sex (victim aged 15) with his stepdaughter. Stef

maintains his innocence for his current offense, though admits to a 'relationship' with his other

victim (from the previous offense).

Initially, Stef was extremely suspicious of the process and he presented as anti-authoritarian.

He blamed social services, police, and probation for his current situation and denied all

responsibility and wrongdoing. He would not do any behavioral programs including non-offense related programs as he believed they were designed to "catch you out", that they were manipulative. He presented as hostile towards the programs team and the prison regime. He did, however, agree to take part in a repertory grid interview as part of a larger study on understanding denial in individuals with sexual convictions (see Blagden et al., 2014). Stef engaged in the repertory grid exercise well. It was clear that he was fully engaged in the task as he often elaborated on his responses and attempted to justify and qualify them.

Analysis and Discussion

The repertory grid analysis allowed an insight into how Stef was construing and making sense of his world at that time (Leach et al., 2001). Jankowicz (2004) suggests a beneficial starting point for repertory grid analysis is with an 'eyeball' analysis of the grid, whereby the ratings are reviewed to give a preliminary understanding of the participant's construing. Figure 1 is Stef's grid, in which low ratings represent the left-hand pole of the construct.

[insert figure 1 here]

This analysis highlights how Stef's 'me now' appears to indicate an individual who is suspicious of others, who struggles to trust and who cannot take things at face value. Interestingly, he views himself as fairly manipulative and the opposite of someone who is positive and outgoing. These initial impressions could also be noted in his repertory grid interview. However, we would concur with Fromm (2004) that most published research neglects repertory grid interview data, despite it being a rich source of meaningful data.

> **Extract 1**
> *Stef: [moves cards]*
> *IV: OK in what way are those two similar?*
> *Stef: We both look for hidden meanings in what people say*

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37
38
39
40
41
42
43
44
45
46
47
48
49
50
51
52
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60

IV: OK, so what kind of…

Stef: Meanings define people's words; it's not what people say it's what they don't say.

IV: Ok looks for hidden meanings in what people say, can you elaborate on that a little bit, what does that mean for you?

Stef: They're looking for motivation and evidence

IV: Ok so what is the opposite of someone who looks for hidden meanings

Stef: Erm an optimist.

Extract 2

Stef: You see I [points to me now me card] I used to be pretty outgoing…but now it's all changed

IV: That's interesting, how has that changed?

Stef: I'm not happy now I'm not outgoing anymore

IV: How would you describe yourself now?

Stef: I've boarded up the windows, all the doors are shut, I'm like a tortoise aren't I (.) I've retreated inside me shell for safety. I can't let err apart from a few people that are there already I can't let any other people near me or close to me…they've trampled all over me and my family and my life and I've had enough, end of and that's how I am…

IV: OK, so you mentioned before about how you now, you've bordered up the windows for safety, what does that mean what kind of person is that?

Stef: Err basically that I can't let people near, can't let people near - it's not how I used to be, not how I want to be

IV: What is the opposite of someone who "can't let people near"

Stef: An outgoing person – that's how I used to be…

These brief extracts are taken from the elicitation process of Stef's repertory grid and they highlight how the constructs "can't let people near – outgoing person" and "hidden meanings – optimistic" were elicited during the administering of the repertory grid. These extracts appear to illustrate how Stef construes himself as a pessimist, and as someone who seeks out people's motives and looks for their hidden meanings – he cannot take things at face value. This seems to point to Stef's struggles to trust within interpersonal relationships and his defensiveness.

11

Indeed, a sense of loneliness and isolation was apparent in the comments made by Stef during the elicitation of constructs for the grid. To further understand Stef's construing a structural analysis of Stef's grid data was conducted.

[Insert figure 2 here]

Figure 2 shows the plot of elements in construct space from the rotated PCA for Stef's grid. The closest element to "me now" is "alleged victim," with most other elements being distant and construed differently. This is interesting when referring back to the raw grid data (see Figure 1) in which the victim is construed as naive and himself construed more in terms of being manipulative. The first component of his PCA plot is concerned with affective states, personal traits, and outlook. He defines himself and the alleged victim in these terms and construes the self as negative and unhappy.

Stef's 'ideal' and 'past' self are construed differently and more positively than 'me now', which may suggest that Stef, at least implicitly, has a desire to change. It could be suggested that Stef has an over-idealization of 'ideal self' and 'past self', which may be affecting his current thinking in that the 'ideal self' is seen as unobtainable. This distance between the self and ideal has also been referred to as a form of 'self-discrepancy', which can be related to different levels of affect (Higgins, 1987). For instance, a discrepancy between the 'actual self' (me now) and the 'ideal self' was characterized by a lack of positive outcomes and was seen to induce dejection-related emotions such as sadness and dissatisfaction. In grid analysis, self-ideal discrepancy is often used as an indicator of self-esteem (Leach, Freshwater, Aldridge & Sunderland, 2001). This would appear to conform to Stef's current state; he appeared to be suffering from low self-esteem and had a negative outlook on life. In addition, Stef was wary of people, pessimistic and in his own words "looks for motives behind what people say". The

repertory grid highlights this as 'me now' is construed as the opposite of someone 'who is able to trust'.

Ryle and Breen (1972) found, using relatively large grids, that in a sample of 'normal' participants the mean variance accounted for by the first principal component was 39.4%. In a case study by García-Mieres et al. (2016), a percentage of variance, accounted for by the first factor, of 56% was regarded as indicative of tight construing. Stef's PCA indicated tight construing as it was found that 63.63% of the variance was accounted for in the first component. This conforms to a more constricted outlook with a tendency for one dimension to be used in the construction of the self and others. Catina et al. (1992) found that denial, which they regarded as 'indicating that the person is only attending to those events that were likely to be validating' (p. 254), was related to tight construal. They postulate that, in this sense, denial could be used to cope with dislodgements of the self, i.e. experiences of guilt. Stef's construing may also enable protection from anxiety and construct invalidation. Myers, Brewin, and Winter (1999) found in their study that repressors (those assessed as having low anxiety but high defensiveness) were significantly tighter in their construing than those assessed as non-repressors.

The importance of an individual's self-identity in the process of change and offending desistance has been well documented (Houston, 1998; Maruna, 2001; Mason, 2003). The self-identity plot (Figure 3) using the elements 'me now' and 'me as I'd like to be' demonstrates the internal relationships between Stef and the significant others in his world and the way he understands them (Mason, 2003).

[Insert figure 3]

As can be noted 'me now' is isolated from the other elements. This has been referred to as actual-self isolation (Norris & Makhlouf-Norris, 1976). Norris and Makhlouf-Norris (1976) found that those suffering from a 'neurotic disorder' were more likely to construe the 'self now' as isolated. Given that one of the primary functions of construing is to reduce uncertainty, particularly uncertainty pertaining to the self, this way of construing would not seem to be adaptive. However, Norris and Makhlouf-Norris (1976) argue that in neurotic patients the need for self-certainty is such that they construe the self in a way which predicts undesirable outcomes, which are certain to be validated, rather than predict desirable outcomes, which would be open to invalidation. It can also be noted again that the discrepancy between self now and ideal self is vast, with the ideal self construed in over-idealized terms.

Stef was an individual labeled by prison treatment managers as being hostile towards prison administration, as having poor motivation for treatment and a denier who was not amenable to intervention or assessment. However, this highlights how the repertory grid is useful in understanding how Stef is making sense of his world and how he is construing himself and others. It demonstrates the utility of using repertory grids with prisoners maintaining their innocence, and highlights how grids can elicit meaningful clinical (and research) data without having to delve into or attempt to discuss the participant's own offending behavior. This fits with shifts within forensic practice to move away from requiring offense disclosure (i.e. admittance) in men doing offender behaviour programs (Ware & Mann 2012; Ware, Blagden, & Harper, 2016).

Case Study 2: Using the repertory grid with individuals who are transitioning from prison to community with the support of a prison-model CoSA.

Background

The participant in this case study is Keith, a 52-year-old man and a Core Member on the prison-model Circle of Support and Accountability (CoSA). A Core Member is someone previously convicted of a sexual offense who forms the center of a circle of volunteers from the local community. At the time of the first meeting, Keith had been in prison for just over two years for a sexual offense. He was due to be released from prison in 6-weeks time and had a very high risk of recidivism according to the Risk Matrix 2000 (Thornton et al., 2003). Keith had initially expressed an interest in the prison-model of CoSA, due to his severe lack of social support on release from prison. He had no contact with his family and no pro-social friendships to speak of.

CoSA is an intervention used with medium to very high risk individuals who have been convicted of a sexual offense. The aim is for volunteers from the local community to support and encourage their reintegration back into society, whilst still holding them accountable for their behavior (Cesaroni, 2002). The UK prison-model CoSA starts approximately 3 months prior to the Core Member's release from prison and lasts into the community on release, with the same volunteers for continuity of support (Kitson-Boyce, Blagden, Winder & Dillon, 2018a, 2018b).

Keith agreed to complete the repertory grids as part of a larger research study exploring the experience of being involved in the prison-model CoSA (Kitson-Boyce et al, 2018a, 2018b). The purpose of the research was to explore Keith's transitional journey from prison to the community including how he construed himself before he started the prison sessions of the CoSA, compared to just before he was released from prison, and then also once in the

community. Due to a CoSA being designed for those with little to no pro-social support, the repertory grids also focused on how Keith construed himself compared to others around him.

The repertory grid was carried out at three separate time points with Keith. Using the same elements at each time point enabled any change in how Keith construed both himself and others to be explored. The elements used consisted of Self in the past, Self now, Self in the future, Mum, Dad, Friend, Brother, An individual convicted of a sexual offense, A non-offending person, A prison officer, An individual from the offender management unit and Someone you do not like. During this process, Keith stated, on several occasions, that he had no friends or relationships with his family but that this was something he wanted to work on once he was in the community.

At the end of each grid, at each time-point, Keith was supplied the following constructs: 'socially supported'/'socially isolated'; 'trusts others easily'/'untrusting'; 'intimate and meaningful relationship'/ 'the opposite was elicited from participant'. Supplying these ensured that constructs were included relevant to the topic of CoSA. Keith's ratings for the elements 'Mum' and 'Dad' were identical. Keith acknowledged that he had not seen either of them for many years and had no relationship with them. It seemed, therefore, that Keith did not construe them as individuals, rather as the same person.

Analysis and Discussion

Keith was engaged throughout the repertory grid process and spoke only positively of his experience with CoSA and hopes for the future, thus implying a cognitive transformation may be taking place. As Table 1 highlights, the distance between how he construed his 'self now' compared to his 'self in the future' reduced slightly during his time on the CoSA, with the biggest change made during the prison sessions. Maruna (2001) argues that for desistance from crime to take place a shift to a pro-social identity is required. This is achieved through the

16

individual reconstructing their internalized life narratives and separating their past self from their current self. Indeed, this separation between the selves can be seen in the differing scores highlighted in Table 1. Interestingly, the distance between his self now and his past self closes slightly just before Keith is released from prison. This finding is significant due to the links made between hope and desistance. For example, LeBel, Burnett, Maruna, and Bushway (2008) reported that a belief in one's ability to leave crime behind, along with a sense of hope, is a necessary condition for an individual to be able to desist from crime. It is possible that doubt may have crept in for Keith as he contemplates life outside of prison. Once in the community, however, this self-belief appears to be restored as the distance grows again between how he construes himself now and how he views his past self. This could indicate that the CoSA volunteers were providing a form of assisted desistance; keeping the motivation to change alive when Keith's self-belief was wavering.

[Insert table 1 here]

A PCA was also carried out on each of Keith's three grids. The PCA output from timepoint one presents the element 'Self in the future' as diametrically opposed to 'Self in the past', with the latter isolated along the negative construct poles of 'being a loner', 'untrusting' and 'someone who doesn't care' (see Figure 4). This demonstrates how, prior to the CoSA beginning, Keith appears to have a clear understanding of his risk factors and the constructs along which he needs to progress to reach where he would like to be in the future.

[Insert figure 4]

The vectors on the PCA also appear more fanned here than the later time points, indicating that Keith's construct system is elaborated with the constructs being meaningful and well-defined (Fransella et al., 2004). This could be interpreted as him feeling comfortable in prison and

17

knowing what is important to him. Indeed, the prison in which he was residing has previously been described within the literature as a place of acceptance, thus generating feelings of safety (Blagden, Winder & Hames, 2016). Despite this, Keith's element 'self now' is within close proximity to the origin of the grid, which suggests an unwillingness to allow this element much thought with regard to the constructs elicited (Mason, 2003).

By the second time point (just before release from prison) Keith's construct poles appear to have shifted slightly, forming two clusters. The first consists of the positive changes he intends to move towards in the future, i.e. calm, honest, open, and non-judgmental. The second cluster is around the negative construct poles he relates to, i.e. a loner, socially isolated, and unsettled. Interestingly the element 'self now' is somewhat closer to these 'negative' poles than at the previous time point. This highlights how, although during the narrative he outlined his perceived change, he construes himself now just before release from prison as more alone and socially isolated than before he had the support of the CoSA. Keith also does not appear to construe himself in the future as socially supported, having intimate relationships, or staying out of 'trouble'. This could indicate that although he has a desire to change, he does not construe these construct poles as defining himself in the future, perhaps feeling 'out of reach' to him from his current position. For individuals previously convicted for sexual offenses specifically, this can be concerning due to social isolation and loneliness being highlighted within the literature as risk factors for sexual recidivism (Hanson & Morton-Bourgon, 2005; Marshall, 2010).

[Insert figure 5]

By timepoint three Keith is living in the community, having received 13 CoSA sessions with his volunteers since leaving prison. The PCA output for the participant at this point (see Figure 5) highlights how the groupings of the constructs are clustered much more tightly than at the

previous two timepoints. These groups fall in only two quadrants of the graph, which, like the previous case study, is indicative of an increase in the tightness of his construal system. This can be explored further through consideration of Keith's PCA variances at each timepoint.

[Insert table 2 here]

As can be seen from Table 2, the percentage of variance accounted for by the first component of the PCA is higher by the final time-point than in the previous two timepoints. As outlined previously, if this tight construing becomes over-relied on, Keith's predictions about the world may become unvarying (Winter, 1992) and possibly have an impact on his ability to progress with his change towards a more pro-social self. Alternatively, however, this tightness may be Keith's attempt at making his new world on release more manageable (Kelly, 1955b), maintaining a barrier to new information until he is more settled. The merit of repertory grids enables such thinking to be uncovered, thus enabling conversations on how to best support the individual to be held. For example, specific support may be offered regarding their flexibility and adaptability to new situations and experiences in the community, which could help 'loosen' their construing and allow space for the new constructs associated with being in the community. For Keith, the support obtained from his CoSA volunteers could be utilized in this way, perhaps involving starting a new hobby or activity with him, at least for the first few sessions until he had developed enough confidence to attend alone. Using the repertory grid findings to highlight specific areas where additional support is needed may enable a CoSA to become tailored to the individual Core Member's needs even further, thus increasing successful reintegration. Indeed, the use of social support in this manner and the creation of a sense of 'we-ness' is arguably what shapes a sense of belonging and reinforces new pro-social identities (Weaver & McNeill, 2015), thus strengthening the Core Members' ties with the community.

Case Study 3: Using a visually adapted repertory grid technique to maximize engagement with individuals convicted of stalking

Background

Andrew is a 30-year-old male, imprisoned in the UK for stalking. The victim was his ex-partner, against whom he used physical surveillance and approach behaviors, causing distress. He self-reported experiencing problems with depression, anxiety, and anger at the time of offending. Whilst willing to engage in the research, Andrew was adamant he was *'not a stalker'*. This case study, derived from research by Wheatley (2019), explored the individual experiences and constructed realities of men convicted of stalking offenses. The repertory grid is adaptable to the needs of the researcher-practitioner. This was the first study to utilize the repertory grid technique in a research capacity with men convicted of stalking, a client group deemed difficult to engage with professionally (Rosenfeld, Fava, & Galietta, 2009). This study was also the first to pilot a Visually Adapted Repertory Grid Technique (VARGT; see Wheatley, Winder, & Kuss, 2020a) as a method to maximise engagement.

The VARGT is a kinaesthetic, collaborative, and non-threatening process for completing the repertory grid. The visual adaptation to the standard repertory grid technique allows the participant to place their own elements on a grid, whilst giving insight into how they are comparing self-concepts and others in the wider research topic context. It also allows the participant to see the element placements and constructs altogether in a written (as opposed to numerical) format, making it easier for them to pick out patterns, reflections, and interpretations from their completed grid. It is task focussed, requiring movement, as opposed to more cognitively direct interviewing styles, and with its displayed transparency it is less threatening to those who may be distrustful of others (see Wheatley, Winder, & Kuss, 2020a for complete replicable instructions). The completed grid represented Andrew's personal construct system regarding his relationships, contextual to the elements, and to stalking. The

VARGT is unique in that it allows the participant to review their own narratively presented repertory grid upon completion. Collaborative participant and researcher observations derived from this qualitative element of the analysis were complemented by statistical analysis of Andrew's repertory grid data.

Analysis and Discussion

Within the three-hour contact time, Andrew disclosed and explored many relationship- and offending-related psychological vulnerabilities. The VARGT demonstrated effectiveness as an engagement, and potentially therapeutic, tool. Most importantly, it provided Andrew with an autonomy-led guided discovery experience. The VARGT combines an investigative formulation tool with absolute visual transparency, enhancing therapeutic alliance, and the ability to reduce shame-based responding. The VARGT encouraged collaboration and produced an explicit and representative construal framework accessible to Andrew for further sense-making to be shared. This was both insight-provoking for Andrew and motivating in respect of the changes he feels he had made and still had to make, based on his values system and placement of *self-ideal*.

Twelve constructs were yielded to rate ten elements, providing rich interrelated data about Andrew's construal of himself, others, and his worldview, contextual to relationships and stalking (see Figure 6, in which low ratings represent the left-hand pole of the construct).

[Insert figure 6 here]

Throughout the VARGT Andrew made references to experiencing *'anger issues'* and disclosed that the use of violence made him *'feel alive'*. With the VARGT focusing on his value systems, as opposed to directly questioning sensitive topics, Andrew seemed able to explore related constructs. The impact of his adverse childhood events was made explicit in terms of how these

shaped his construal of others and relationships in general. Indeed, collaborative eyeball analysis provided richer explanations particularly regarding the development and strength of the *survivor–wimp* construct. This was motivating for Andrew as he could appraise for himself how his own construct system linked to core criminogenic needs, for example, using pre-emptive violence in response to anticipated victimization. Using the repertory grid in this way as an assessment and formulation tool is evident in previous research (e.g., Mason, 2008). The VARGT, however, allowed this to be client-led as Andrew had visual access to his construct system to show how he had psychologically adapted to victimization, and became a *survivor* as opposed to a *wimp*.

Andrew's *smart-foolish* construct was dominant in his construal system in judging others (contributing to principal component 1, which explained 60% of the variance in the completed repertory grid). Based on Andrew's narrative, and positioning of the constructs within statistical analysis plots, it was evident that he construed people who are *smart* positively, and opposite to how he viewed those as *foolish*. The element that most correlated with *foolish* was the *stalker* (0.79). The construct correlations show that Andrew conceptualizes being *foolish* as someone who *acts first* without thinking things through (0.94), is a *wimp* (0.90), and is someone who *blames others* (0.90). Andrew construed the *stalker* using these characteristics and distanced himself from the same. The collaborative eyeball analysis discussion highlighted Andrew's propensity for polarized thinking, potentially explaining his definitive judgments of others. Andrew's element placements on constructs differentiated those he positively and negatively construed. The descriptive analysis of the grid using Idiogrid confirmed his tendency to rate elements in extremities, as did the groupings seen in Figure 7 on the Self-Identity Plot. This polarized construing suggests that once he forms views of others, these may be rigid and unvarying (Winter, 1992), perhaps a way of maintaining psychological predictability in his *survivor* mode.

[Insert figure 7 here]

The Self Identity Plot (SIP) suggests that Andrew views his *self-now* positively in comparison to *self-past* and that there is still some distance to transition to his construed *self-ideal.* Andrew's *self-now* is discrepant from *self-past* thus indicating a possible healthy level of self-esteem has developed. The groupings of elements show whom he views more positively, i.e. closest to his *self-now* and *self-ideal*, and those negatively construed, for example, *self-past, stalker, person you don't like*, and *victim*. Andrew was not construing the victim as associated with himself at the time of engaging with the VARGT, nor as part of his ideal self, which in risk management terms was encouraging.

The most correlated elements were *self-ideal* and *mother* (0.84), which suggested he admired and idolized his mother. This positive role model could provide him with desistance motivation and tangible values to work towards developing. The correlation between *self-past* and *victim* (0.82) suggested that Andrew construed both elements similarly. As Andrew construed *self-past* negatively (*self-past* was at the time of stalking), this correlation could suggest he condemns his offending but also holds a contemptuous view of the victim. In risk management terms the nature, strength, and currency of this view would be assessed.

Initially, Andrew rejected any association between his own behavior and stalking. However, in later reviewing the completed VARGT grid, Andrew reflected on his similar ratings of *self-past* and *stalker* elements along all constructs. In realizing this, Andrew commented, '*I could see the resemblance… but I wouldn't class myself as a stalker… I have got tendencies of a stalker because I would follow her to school'*. Andrew was then able to explore the characteristics and behaviors associated with the constructs on which he had aligned his *self-past* and *stalker*, disclosing internal experiences as *self-past* (when stalking). These shifts in construing and levels of acceptance offer therapeutic potential for practitioner-client

engagements using the VARGT (see Wheatley, Winder, & Kuss, 2020b). Indeed, self-identifying problems in this way is deemed beneficial for rehabilitation (see Ware, Blagden, & Harper, 2018). Andrew seemed able to disclose whilst psychologically defending himself against the label 'stalker', which proved therapeutically enabling.

The VARGT allowed Andrew to convey perpetuating drivers for his stalking behaviors that he had not previously been able to identify and reflect upon. Continuing to stalk an ex-partner after she had entered into a new relationship demonstrated his inability to accept the loss and all that meant for him. At that time he convinced himself he needed his victim to verbalize the finality to help him walk away but recognized on reflection this was a misguided cognitive pattern, experienced as *'an oily downward spiral, as soon as you slip you keep sliding and you can't get back up'*. When rating the element *self-past*, which denoted his stalking episode, along the construct *trusts self/own judgment-can't trust self/own judgment*, Andrew immediately articulated a psychological deficit driving his repetitive and all-consuming need for contact with the victim. He commented, '*Bam, straight away! I was never able to trust my own judgment'*, which was interpreted as an inability to accept what he knew to be true instinctually.

As experienced with Andrew, the repertory grid can assist in exploring individuals' experiences which may otherwise be psychologically defended (Turpin, Dallos, Owen, & Thomas, 2009) and hard to access. Accessing and disclosing insights such as these may be uncommon for clients whose difficulties with interpersonal relationships are inherent. Andrew's realizations and disclosures suggested a fundamentally fragile sense of self-worth, significant to his stalking offending, which increased his propensity for emotional dysregulation and a misguided sense of entitlement to answers to protect the *self*. These would be noteworthy aspects to address in risk-related intervention. The VARGT had therapeutic value in provoking client-led insight, which could provide a collaborative basis from which to explore treatment options (Wheatley,

Winder, & Kuss, 2020b). Andrew's completed grid further highlighted that he felt he had made incremental and positive transitions along the continuums in the favored direction when comparing *self-past*, *self-now,* and *self-future*. He also aligned *self-now* and *self-ideal* with other positively viewed elements in his life (e.g. his *mother*). This had a motivating impact on Andrew.

A PCA plot presented a visual representation of Andrew's personal construct framework contextual to relationships and stalking. Andrew's PCA (see Figure 8) shows some tight construing. The impact of adverse childhood experiences may have contributed to Andrew's development of this 'all or nothing' thinking. Making our world more predictable brings a sense of security when it might otherwise be lacking from within ourselves (Winter, 2003). Given the possible psychologically protective function of 'all or nothing' thinking, a considerate approach to facilitating any attempts to change this way of construing will be necessary. Interestingly, there are three elements appearing closest to the center (value of 0) in Andrew's PCA plot, denoting they are ill-defined. One of these is *self-now*, which is perhaps consistent with an unstable sense of self, and an area that could also be identified for therapeutic intervention.

[Insert figure 8]

The PCA plot visually presents all of the aforementioned analyses, for example, the similarity in his construing of *self-past* and *victim*, and of *self-ideal* and *mother*. The plot shows that Andrew views his *self-past* negatively; unable to trust his own judgment, being without goals and inactive, whereas he views his *self-now* as opposite to this. His *self-ideal* is construed as a calm person who is socially connected to others, which are additional to the *self-now* related constructs and could denote his interpersonal future goals.

25

Conclusion

This paper provides a contribution to the field of forensic practice by showcasing the utility of the repertory grid technique in forensic research, assessment, and formulation activity. The method enables the analysis of subjective meaning and idiosyncratic belief systems, which can prove invaluable for engagement and intervention planning when working with populations who may present as guarded. The repertory grid represents a tool useful for deriving clinical data from individuals, without them having to disclose information regarding the offense they have been convicted for.

Areas of self-discrepancy can also be illuminated whereby an over-idealisation of the future or ideal self may be occurring. Offending-related psychological vulnerabilities can be explored, enabling possible dynamic risk factors to be identified and areas of further support to be highlighted. For example, factors such as loneliness, anxiety, low self-esteem, and suspicious thinking were all highlighted in the case studies considered. Using the repertory grid over different time points enables evidence of reconstruing, often related to desistance, to be identified and documented. Finally, the merit of using the repertory grid as a client-led tool is evident. It is de-shaming and can create shifts in acceptance even when assimilating their own offending behavior. Using the repertory grid for a therapeutic purpose, however, is in the preliminary stages and now requires further exploration.

There are potential limitations to acknowledge when considering the use of the repertory grid in a forensic setting. Historically, nomothetic assessment has generally been preferred in forensic practice, whereby data from large groups of people is used to evaluate the effectiveness of interventions and develop reliable risk assessments (DeMatteo, Batastini, Foster, & Hunt, 2010). This is changing however, and more idiographic type data, such as that derived from

repertory grids, is being recognized for its worth in terms of highlighting risk-relevant factors overlooked by nomothetic measures (e.g. Doyle, Tansey, & Kirkland, 2019).

In addition, one of the main limitations of using repertory grids, as a method of data collection, is that it can be time-consuming in its administration (Winter, 2003). It is important that researchers are mindful of possible fatigue and frustration within the participants when administering the repertory grids. Additional research, with forensic populations specifically, is now required to further explore possibilities and benefits of using the repertory grid technique.

References

Ashworth, P. (2003). The origins of qualitative research. In J. A. Smith (Ed.), *Qualitative Psychology: A Practical Guide to Research Methods,* (pp. 51-80). Sage.

Borell, K., Espwall, M., Pryce, J., & Brenner, S. (2003). The repertory grid technique in social work research, practice, and education. *Qualitative Social Work, 2*(4), 477-491. http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/1473325003024006

Blagden, N., Winder, B., Gregson, M., & Thorne, K. (2012). The practical utility of using repertory grids with sexual offenders maintaining their innocence: A case study. *The British Journal of Forensic Practice, 14*(4), 269-280. http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/14636641211283075

Blagden, N., Winder, B., Gregson, M., & Thorne, K. (2014). Making sense of denial in sexual offenders: A qualitative phenomenological and repertory grid analysis. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence, 29*(9), 1-34. http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/0886260513511530

Blagden, N., Winder, B., & Hames, C. (2016). They treat us like human beings—Experiencing a therapeutic sex offenders prison: Impact on prisoners and staff and implications for treatment. *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology*, *60*(4), 371-396. https://doi.org/10.1177/0306624x14553227

Catina, A., Gitzinger, I., Hoeckh, H. (1992). Defence mechanisms: An approach from the perspective of personal construct psychology *International Journal of Personal Construct Psychology,* 5, 249-257.

Cesaroni, C. (2002). Releasing sex offenders into the community through Circles of support-A means of reintegrating the Worst of the worst. *Journal of Offender Rehabilitation, 34*(2), 85-98. https://doi.org/10.1300/j076v34n02_06

DeMatteo, D., Batastini, A., Foster, E., & Hunt, E. (2010). Individualizing risk assessment: Balancing idiographic and nomothetic data. *Journal of Forensic Psychology Practice*, *10*(4), 360-371. https://doi.org/10.1080/15228932.2010.481244

Doyle, P., Tansey, L., & Kirkland, J. (2019). A repertory grid study of CAT group formulation in a forensic setting. *International Journal of Cognitive Analytic Therapy and Relational Mental Health*, *3*, 69-93.

Easterby-Smith, M. (1980). The design, analysis and interpretation of repertory grids. *International Journal of Man-Machine Studies, 13*(1), 3-24. http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S0020-7373(80)80032-0

Epting, F., Gemignan, M., & Cross, M. (2005). An audacious adventure. Personal construct counselling and psychotherapy. In F. Fransella (Ed.), The Essential Practitioner's Handbook of Personal Construct Psychology, (pp. 113-121). John Wiley & Sons.

Fransella, F., Bell, R., & Bannister, D. (2004). *A Manual for Repertory Grid Technique.* John Wiley & Sons.

Fromm, M. (2004). *Introduction to the Repertory Grid Interview.* Vaxmann Verlag.

Gaines-Hardison, H., & Neimeyer, R. (2012). Assessment of personal constructs: Features and functions of constructivist techniques. In P. Caputi, L. Viney, B. Walker, & N. Crittenden (Eds.), *Personal Construct Methodology.* (pp.3-51). Wiley-Blackwell.

García-Mieres, H., Ochoa, S., Salla, M., López-Carrilero, R., & Feixas, G. (2016). Understanding the paranoid psychosis of James: Use of the repertory grid technique for

28

case conceptualization. *World Journal of Psychiatry*, *6*(3), 381-390. https://doi.org/10.5498/wjp.v6.i3.381

Grice, J. W. (2002). Idiogrid: Software for the management and analysis of repertory grids. *Behavior Research Methods, Instruments, & Computers, 34*(3), 338-341. http://dx.doi.org/10.3758/BF03195461

Hanson, R. K., & Morton-Bourgon, K. E. (2005). The characteristics of persistent sexual offenders: A meta-analysis of recidivism studies. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, 73*(6), 1154-1163. http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/0022-006X.73.6.1154

Higgins, E. T. (1987). Self-discrepancy: a theory relating self and affect. *Psychological Review*, *94*(3), 319. https://doi.org/10.1037//0033-295x.94.3.319

Horley, J. (1988). Cognitions of child sex abusers. *Journal of Sex Research, 25*, 542-545.

Horley, J. (1996). Content stability in the repertory grid: An examination using a forensic sample. *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology*, *40*(1), 26-31.

Horley, J. (2008). *Sexual offenders: Personal construct theory and deviant sexual behavior*. Routledge.

Houston, J. (1998). *Making sense with offenders: Personal constructs, therapy and change*. John Wiley & Sons Ltd.

Howells, K. (1983). Social construing and violent behavior in mentally abnormal offenders. In J. W. Hinton (Ed.), *Dangerousness: Problems of assessment and prediction* (pp. 114-129). Allen and Unwin.

Jankowicz, D. (2004). *The easy guide to repertory grids*. John Wiley & Sons Ltd.

Kelly, G. A. (1955a). *The psychology of personal constructs. Volume 1: A theory of personality*. Norton.

Kelly, G. (1955b) *The psychology of personal constructs: Volume 2 – Clinical diagnosis and psychotherapy*. New York: Norton.

29

Kitson-Boyce, R., Blagden, N., Winder, B., & Dillon, G. (2018a). This time it's different - preparing for release through CoSA (The prison model): A phenomenological and repertory grid analysis. *Sexual Abuse: A Journal of Research and Treatment,* 1-22. http://doi.org/10.1177/1079063218775969

Kitson-Boyce, R., Blagden, N., Winder, B., & Dillon, G. (2018b). A prison-model of CoSA: The potential to offer through the gate support and accountability. *Journal of Sexual Aggression, 24,* (3). 294-310. https://doi.org/10.1080/13552600.2018.1509575

Leach, C., Freshwater, K., Aldridge, J., & Sunderland, J. (2001). Analysis of repertory grids in clinical practice. *British Journal of Clinical Psychology*, *40*(3), 225-248. https://doi.org/10.1348/014466501163652

LeBel, T. P., Burnett, R., Maruna, S., & Bushway, S. (2008). The chicken and egg of subjective and social factors in desistance from crime. *European Journal of Criminology, 5*(2), 131-159. http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/1477370807087640

McNeill, F. (2009). What works and what's just? *European Journal of Probation, 1*(1), 21-40. http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/206622030900100103

Marshall, W. L. (2010). The role of attachments, intimacy, and loneliness in the etiology and maintenance of sexual offending. *Sexual and Relationship Therapy, 25*(1), 73-85. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/14681990903550191

Maruna, S. (2001). *Making good: How ex-convicts reform and rebuild their lives*. American Psychological Association Book.

Mason, J. (2003). The use of a repertory grid as an aid to assessment and formulation in a sex offender with a learning disability. *The British Journal of Forensic Practice, 5*(3), 13-20. http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/14636646200300016

Mason, J. (2008). Measuring psychological change in offenders with intellectual disabilities and alcohol misuse using repertory grids: Two case examples. *The British Journal of Forensic Practice, 10*(4), 37-44. http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/14636646200800024

Myers, L. B., Brewin, C. R., & Winter, D. A. (1999). Repressive coping and self-reports of parenting. *British Journal of Clinical Psychology*, *38*(1), 73-82. https://doi.org/10.1348/014466599162674

Neimeyer, G. J., Bowman, J. Z., & Saferstein, J. (2005). The effects of elicitation techniques on repertory grid outcomes: Difference, opposite, and contrast methods. *Journal of Constructivist Psychology, 18*(3), 237-252. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/10720530590948791

Norris, H., & Makhlouf-Norris, F. (1976). *The measurement of self-identity.* In Slater, P. (Ed.), *The measurement of intrapersonal space by grid technique: Vol. 1. Explorations of intrapersonal space (pp. 79-82).* Wiley.

Paget, A., & Ellett, L. (2014). Relationships among self, others, and persecutors in individuals with persecutory delusions: A repertory grid analysis. *Behavior Therapy, 45*(2), 273-282. http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.beth.2013.12.001

Rosenfeld, B., Fava, J., & Galietta, M. (2009). Working with the stalking offender. Considerations for risk assessment and intervention. In J. L. Werth, Jr., E. R. Welfel, & G. A. H. Benjamin (Eds.), *The duty to protect: Ethical, legal, and professional considerations for mental health professionals* (pp. 95-109). American Psychological Association. http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/11866-007

Ryle, A., & Breen, D. (1972). Some differences in the personal constructs of neurotic and normal subjects. *The British Journal of Psychiatry*, *120*(558), 483-489.

Saúl, L. A., Lopez-Gonzalez, M. A., Moreno-Pulido, A., Corbella, S., Compan, V., & Feixas, G. (2012). Bibliometric review of the repertory grid technique: 1998–2007. *Journal of Constructivist Psychology*, *25*(2), 112-131. https://doi.org/10.1080/10720537.2012.651065

Shorts, I. D. (1985). Treatment of a sex offender in a maximum security forensic hospital: Detecting changes in personality and interpersonal construing. *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology, 29*(3), 237-250. http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/0306624X8502900307

Smith, H. J. (2000). The reliability and validity of structural measures derived from repertory grids. *Journal of Constructivist Psychology*, *13*(3), 221-230.

Tan, F. B., & Hunter, M. G. (2002). The repertory grid technique: A method for the study of cognition in information systems. *MIS Quarterly, 26*(1), 39-57. http://dx.doi.org/10.2307/4132340

Thornton, D., Mann, R., Webster, S., Blud, L., Travers, R., Friendship, C., & Erikson, M. (2003). Distinguishing and combining risks for sexual and violent recidivism. *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences, 989*(1), 225-235. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1749-6632.2003.tb07308.x

Turpin, M., Dallos, R., Owen, R., & Thomas, M. (2009). The meaning and impact of head and neck cancer: An interpretative phenomenological and repertory grid analysis. *Journal of Constructivist Psychology, 22*(1), 24-54. https://doi.org/10.1080/10720530802500789

Walker, B. M., & Winter, D. A. (2007). The elaboration of personal construct psychology. *Annual Review of Psychology*, *58*, 453-477. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.psych.58.110405.085535

Ware, J., Blagden, N., & Harper, C. (2018). Are categorical deniers different? Understanding demographic, personality, and psychological differences between denying and admitting individuals with sexual convictions. *Deviant Behavior,* 1-14. https://doi.org/10.1080/01639625.2018.1558944

Ware, J., & Mann, R. E. (2012). How should acceptance of responsibility be addressed in sexual offending treatment programs? *Aggression and Violent Behavior*, *17*(4), 279-288. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.avb.2012.02.009

Weaver, B., & McNeill, F. (2015). Lifelines desistance, social relations, and reciprocity. *Criminal Justice and Behavior, 42*(1), 95-107. http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/0093854814550031

Wheatley, R. (2019), What drives men who commit stalking offences and how practitioners can best respond to their needs, Doctoral dissertation, Nottingham Trent University, available at: http://irep.ntu.ac.uk/id/eprint/37679/

Wheatley, R. Winder, B., & Kuss, D. (2020a), Using a visually adapted repertory grid technique (VARGT) with men who stalk, *Journal of Forensic Practice, 22*(2), 109-121. https://doi.org/10.1108/JFP-10-2019-0048

Wheatley, R., Winder, B., & Kuss, D. (2020b), Researcher-practitioner reflections: the therapeutic utility of the visually adapted repertory grid technique (VARGT) with stalkers, *Journal of Forensic Practice, 22*(2), 97-108. https://doi.org/10.1108/JFP-09-2019-0041

Winter, D. (1992) *Personal construct psychology in clinical practice*. Routledge.

Winter, D. A. (2003). Repertory grid technique as a psychotherapy research measure. *Psychotherapy Research, 13*(1), 25-42. https://doi.org/10.1093/ptr/kpg005

	Me Now	Police Officer	Spouse	Me as I'd like to be	Alleged Victim	Prisoner admitting offence	Me before arrest	Person you don't like	Prisoner maintaining innocence	Person you like	
Optimist	6	7	3	3	7	6	2	6	5	4	Pessimist (looks for hidden meanings)
Happy Person	5	6	4	2	6	3	2	6	5	3	Burdened Person
Outgoing person	6	5	4	2	6	3	2	6	3	3	Can't let people near (introverted)
Positive outlook on life	6	4	4	2	6	4	2	6	3	3	Negative outlook on life
Happy Life	5	5	4	2	7	4	3	6	4	3	Unhappy life
Manipulative	4	1	5	4	7	4	3	2	4	4	Naive
Honest and Truthful	4	7	4	2	7	4	3	6	4	3	Liar (Dishonest person)
Paranoid of people's motives	2	4	4	4	2	5	4	3	3	5	Able to trust people

Notes:
Constructs: 8   # Elements: 10.
Grid Type: Rating   Scale Range: 1.00 to   7.00.

Figure 1: Repertory grid data for Stef
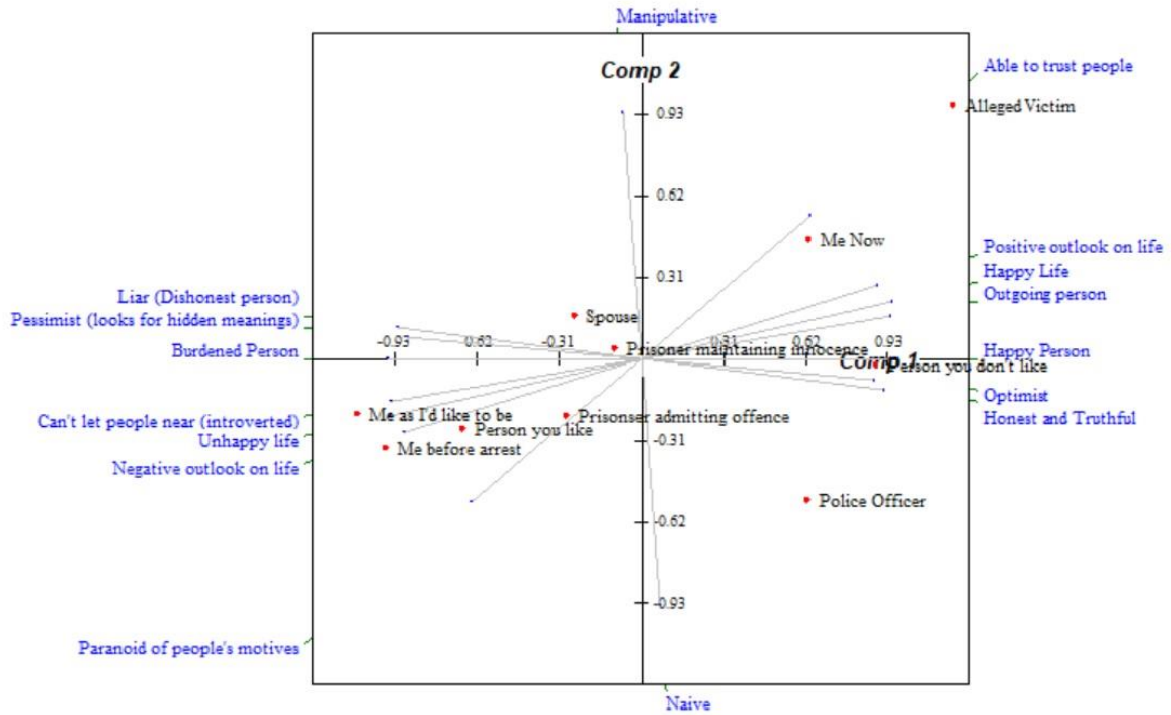
Figure 2: Principal components analysis for Stef

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37
38
39
40
41
42
43
44
45
46
47
48
49
50
51
52
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60

09/09/2009 (08:22:03)
Self-Identity Plot for Stef Grid
Indifferent Area Limits = 0.80; 1.20.
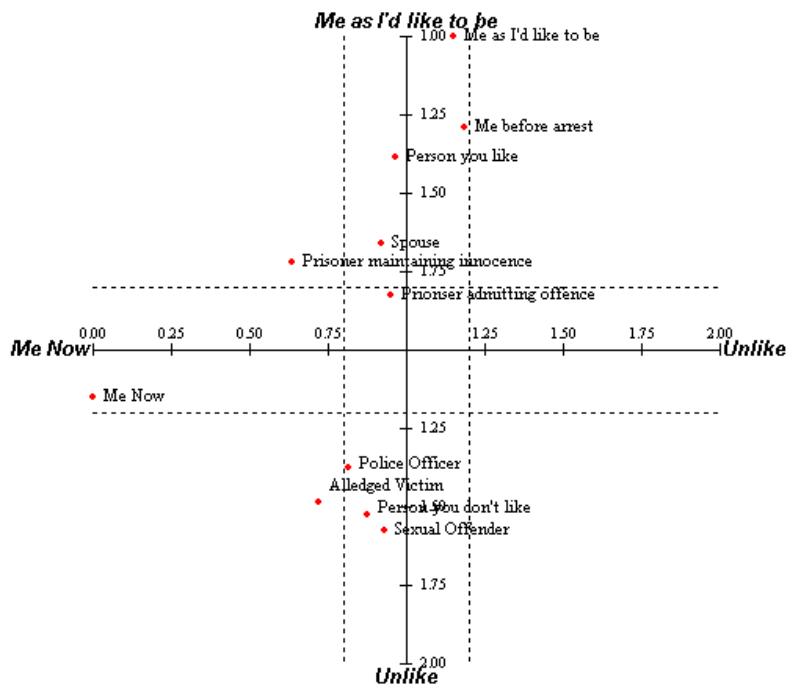
Figure 3: Self-identity plot for Stef

Table 1: Summary of scores for the different 'selves' at the three data collection timepoints

	Pre-CoSA	Pre-release	Community
Self now – Self in the past distance *	1.20	1.02	1.29
Self now – Self in the future distance *	0.56	0.40	0.38

Distances calculated using the standardised Euclidian Distance
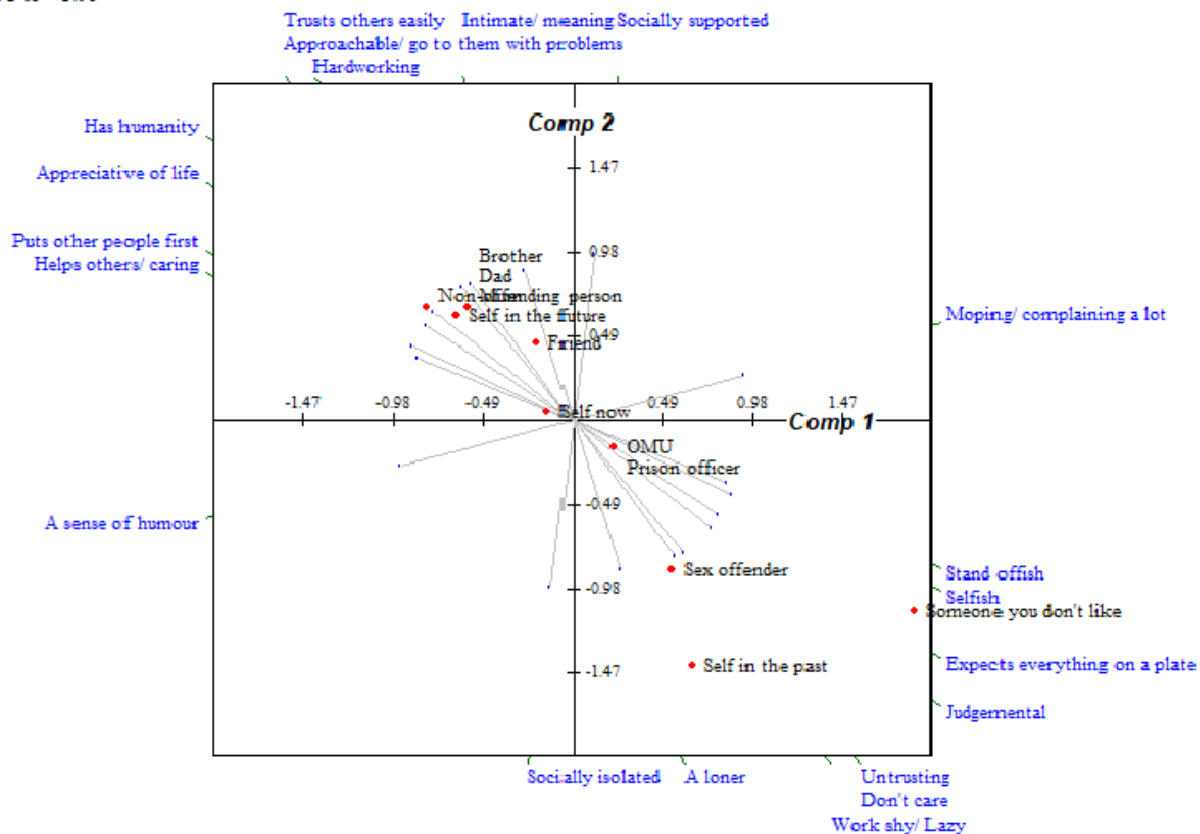
Figure 4. Principal component analysis for Keith at time point 1: Pre CoSA
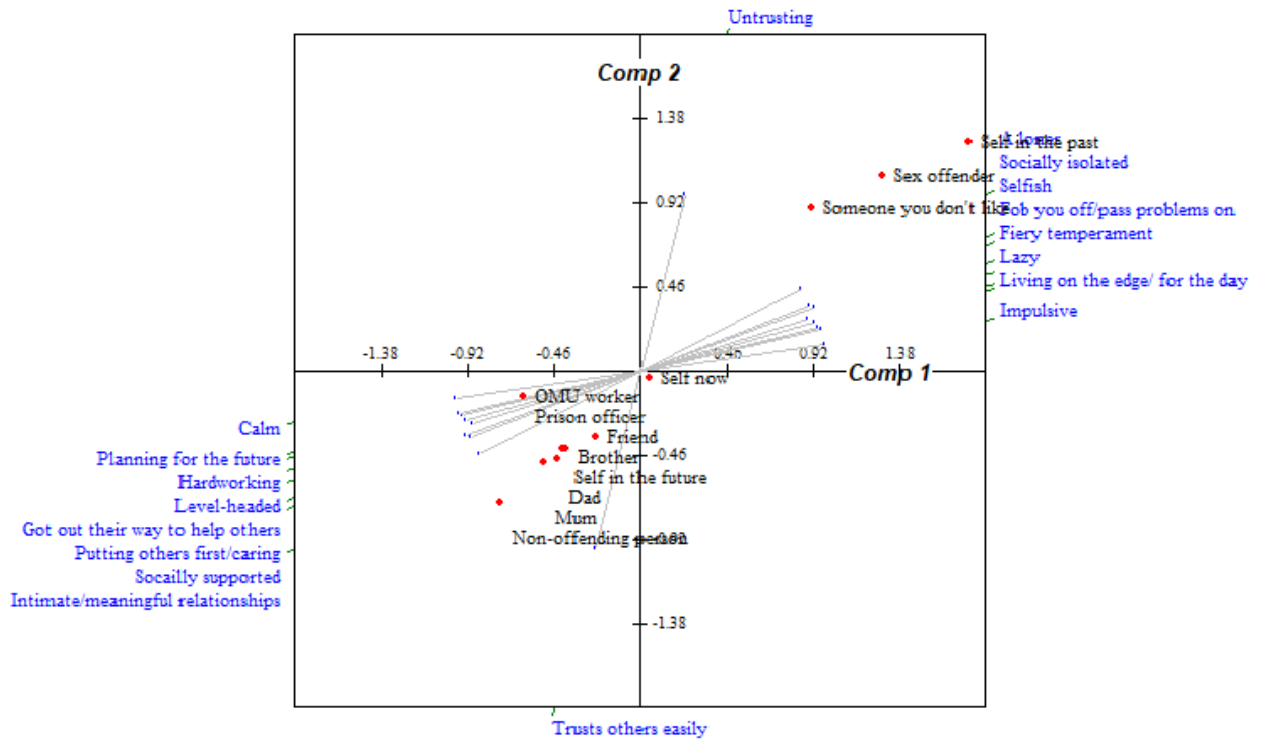
Figure 5. Principal component analysis for Keith at time point 3: During the community sessions

Table 2. Principal component analysis variance for the three time-points

Data collection time-point	% total variance by PC1 (rotated)
1 – Pre - CoSA	46.56%
2 – Pre-release	53.50%
3 - Community	76.60%

	Self-Now	Self-Past	Self-Future/Ideal	(Alleged) Victim	Mother	'Stalker'	Prison Officer	Person Don't Like	Person Like	Close Friend	
Smart	4	6	2	5	2	7	3	6	2	3	Foolish
Survivor	4	4	2	5	2	7	4	6	3	3	Wimp
Open	3	5	2	6	2	7	3	7	4	4	Quiet/collected
Takes blame	3	7	3	6	2	7	4	5	2	4	Blames others
Thinks first	4	4	1	5	2	7	3	6	2	3	Acts first
Helps others	2	4	3	4	1	7	3	6	2	4	Selfish
Calm person	3	7	3	5	1	6	3	4	2	4	Angry person
Trusts self/judgements	2	7	1	6	3	1	2	1	4	3	Can't trust self/judgement
Has goals	2	4	1	5	2	1	4	7	1	3	Wastes time
Working/active person	2	5	1	6	1	1	3	6	1	4	Boring/inactive person
Feels good about self	2	7	2	4	3	1	3	1	4	4	Low self-worth
Connected to others	3	7	2	6	2	7	3	5	4	2	Loner

Figure 6: Repertory grid data for Andrew

	Self-Now	Self-Past	Self-Future/Ideal	(Alleged) Victim	Mother	'Stalker'	Prison Officer	Person Don't Like	Person Like	Close Friend	
Smart	4	6	2	5	2	7	3	6	2	3	Foolish
Survivor	4	4	2	5	2	7	4	6	3	3	Wimp
Open	3	5	2	6	2	7	3	7	4	4	Quiet/collected
Takes blame	3	7	3	6	2	7	4	5	2	4	Blames others
Thinks first	4	4	1	5	2	7	3	6	2	3	Acts first
Helps others	2	4	3	4	1	7	3	6	2	4	Selfish
Calm person	3	7	3	5	1	6	3	4	2	4	Angry person
Trusts self/judgements	2	7	1	6	3	1	2	1	4	3	Can't trust self/judgement
Has goals	2	4	1	5	2	1	4	7	1	3	Wastes time
Working/active person	2	5	1	6	1	1	3	6	1	4	Boring/inactive person
Feels good about self	2	7	2	4	3	1	3	1	4	4	Low self-worth
Connected to others	3	7	2	6	2	7	3	5	4	2	Loner

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30

12/03/2019 (16:56:33)
Self-Identity Plot for Andrew
Indifferent Area Limits = 0.80; 1.20.
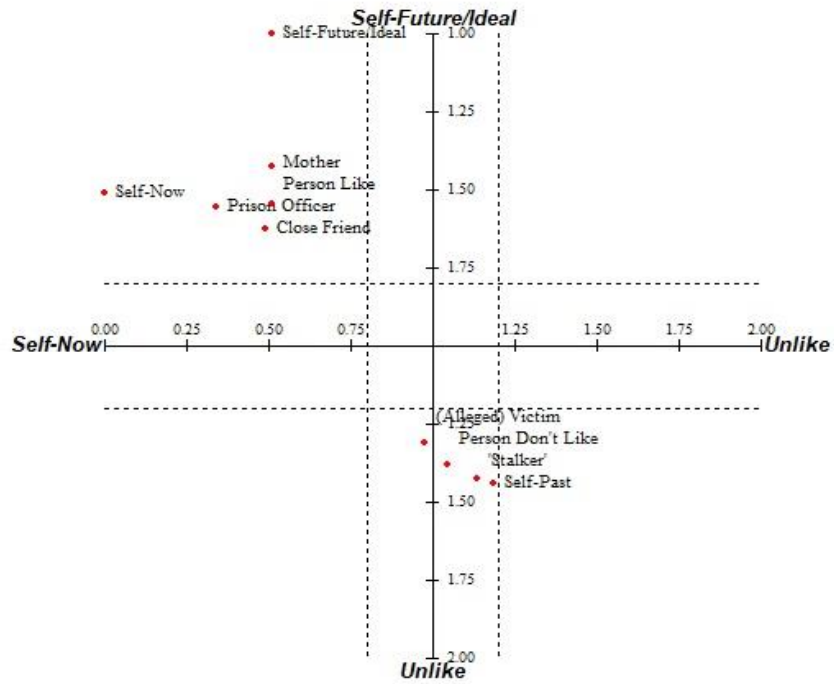
Figure 7. Self-identity plot for Andrew using *self-now* and *self-ideal*
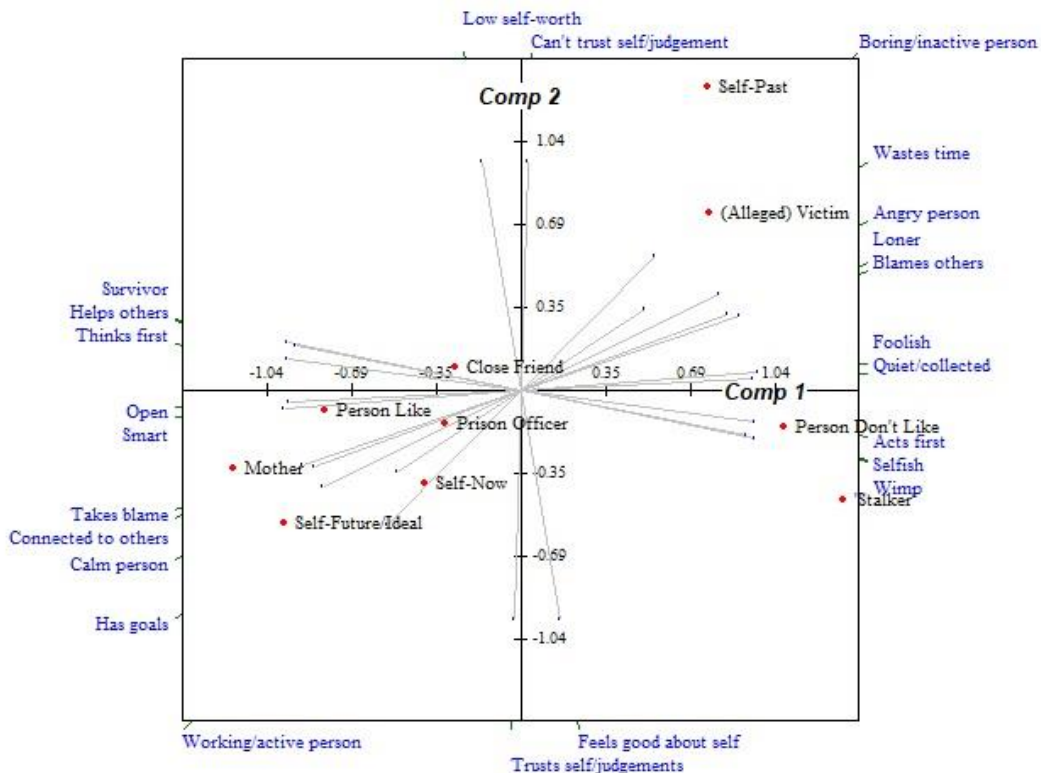
PCA (varimax) for Andrew
Axis Range: -1.38 to 1.38

Figure 8. Principal Components Analysis (PCA) for Andrew