

Editorial

HOW PCT&P CAME ABOUT
AND WHAT ITS ROLE MAY BE IN THE FUTURE

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Most people working in an academic discipline and its practical applications would probably agree that the discipline needs an academic, peer-reviewed journal that helps articulate the main issues, theoretical underpinnings, fields of applications etc. based on serious research. That's why there are journals e. g. of social psychology, of clinical psychology and many others. Traditionally, such journals are published by professional publishers who also need to have commercial considerations on their minds.

For these reasons Robert and Greg Neimeyer founded the *International Journal of Personal Construct Psychology* in 1988 (published by Taylor & Francis), about thirty years after the publication of George Kelly's monumental two volumes of "The Psychology of Personal Constructs" in 1955. In the editorial of the first issue they wrote: "The publication of this journal is the visible result of a sustained period of intellectual and social development in the field of personal construct psychology... The efforts of all the above have helped sustain our own optimistic anticipations regarding the future of the International Journal of Personal Constructive Psychology" (Neimeyer & Neimeyer, 1988). The journal had an impressive editorial board of 34 scholars from eight countries. This was welcomed by the informal PCP community of the day that had manifested itself along the series of International Congresses that began in 1976.

However, already six years later, in 1994 the editors felt the need to change the title (and the focus) to *Journal of Constructivist Psychology*, thus extending the area covered from Kelly's Personal Construct Psychology to the wider field of "Constructivism", hoping to attract scholars and readers beyond the PCP community, adepts of Social Constructionism, Radical Constructivism, up to various forms of related Humanistic Psychology. They wrote: "We hope that JCP will become essential reading for counselors and psychotherapists of many theoretical orientations looking for novel contributions to their practice, as well as for scholars in a range of disciplines concerned with the ramifications of postmodern thought for the study of individual and social systems" (Neimeyer & Neimeyer, 1993). I suppose that the publishers were not happy with the unsatisfactory "paid distribution" (as published annually in the journal, required by US law) of the *International Journal of PCP*. Yet the figures published in 2021 for the *Journal of Constructivist Psychology* are even more disappointing in view of the intellectual power of the theory and the worldwide distribution of its practitioners.

At the 1994 conference of the *European Personal Construct Association* Fay Fransella reported that she and Franz Epting had discussed the publication of a "Journal of Applied PCP" with a leading publisher "but that it was felt there would be too few readers" (Fransella, 1996).

Then the age of the Internet arrived, and Beverly Walker and I developed the idea of a free *Internet Encyclopaedia of PCP* which we started in 2003 – today still a “work in progress”. Similarly, the late Trevor Butt and I thought that if a print journal dedicated to a field with comparatively few scholars and practitioners was not economically viable for a publisher with understandable economic considerations, why not create a self-published online journal that could be produced with limited costs and hence free for readers? Authors and reviewers these days are not expecting financial compensation, and the actual costs of producing a journal are a few dollars (or euros) to pay for the necessary webspace, which is not more than the price of “a pizza a month” – plus the costs for web design, layout, and the editorial work which also can be done for free or with little costs. “Paid distribution” as a criterion for viability of the project would not be an issue. So we founded this journal in 2004 (nearly 50 years “after Kelly”) and called it *Personal Construct Theory and Practice*. After a few years, we were offered by renowned publishers to take over the journal as an “open access” journal. While one could naively think that “open access” means everything is free, there are actually three ways of financing such a project from the publisher’s point of view: (1) reader pays (we thought that this does not apply to a really “free” journal), (2) author pays, (3) institution where an author works pays. In fact, applications for research grants these days often include money for publishing research results. Author pays (and institution pays) means he or she pays an “Article Processing Charge (APC)”. This can amount to e.g. 1000 \$ for “closed access”, or 3500 \$ for “open access” articles. This seems realistic if a professional publisher is involved. But we stayed with the homemade, amateurish way of publishing, still with peer-reviewed papers.

Sadly, Trevor Butt passed away in 2015. Luckily, Viv Burr stepped in as co-editor. For me personally the question arose, as I am far beyond retirement age, how to secure the existence of the journal “after me”. I was aware of the fate of the journal (and the society) *Constructivism in the*

Human Sciences which Michael Mahoney had founded in 1996. After his untimely death in 2006 it was discontinued (but kept accessible on the Internet). To avoid a similar development, I asked Massimo Giliberto who was already the founder of the *Rivista Italiana di Costruttivismo* if he thought that he and his group at the *Institute of Constructivist Psychology* in Padua, Italy could take over our journal. He agreed, and in 2020 he and Chiara Lui became editors. Chiara Lui became Managing Editor and Viv Burr and I stayed on as editors. In 2021, Massimo Giliberto and Chiara Lui took over as publishers.

Publishing in a marginal discipline like PCP is a tricky business. Many young scholars are inclined, even required (e.g. by their institutions) to publish in “listed” journals with high impact factors (which basically means being quoted by many other authors – barely possible for a small discipline such as PCP) where they may reach readers in specified fields or areas of applications outside of PCP. As a consequence, no manuscripts were submitted to PCT&P in 2018 and one in 2020. Obviously, that does not mean that PCP scholars are not productive anymore, only that they publish elsewhere. Why then continue with PCT&P? One reason is that it is the only journal dedicated specifically to Personal Construct Psychology and thus offers space for the further development of the theory, and for the conversations among scholars and practitioners necessary if a discipline is to blossom in the future. Besides, this journal offers room to publish, in addition to “normal” manuscripts, lengthy essays that cannot be published elsewhere, such as Harry Procter’s treatises on Kelly and Peirce (Procter, 2014, 2016), Dennis Hinkle’s 1965 groundbreaking dissertation (Hinkle, 2010), Al Landfield’s (Landfield, 2011) and Rue Cromwell’s (Cromwell, 2017) reminiscences.

Also, publishers nowadays are reluctant to publish collections of congress papers because readers tend to photocopy specific articles they are interested in from library copies without buying the book – which makes the publication of such books economically not viable for

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professional publishers. PCT&P however has published collected papers of various PCP conferences that otherwise would not get published: *Fay Fransella's 80th birthday celebration 2007* at the University of Hertfordshire in Hatfield, UK (Jones & Reed, 2008), conference collections of *Brisbane 2007* (Bell, 2008), *Padua 2016* (Giliberto et al., 2017), *Edinburgh 2018* (Procter et al. 2019). Other edited collections were Cintra Whitehead's articles on *PCP and Literature* (Scheer & Burr, 2016) and a collection of articles on *PCP and the Arts* (Scheer & Burr, 2009).

Since 2004, PCT&P has published 118 articles, 14 book reviews and, sadly, 18 obituaries. I am confident (and grateful) that under the management of Massimo Giliberto and Chiara Lui with the assistance of Viv Burr the journal will continue to contribute to the further development of Personal Construct Psychology in the years to come.

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