

George Kelly's Role Construct Repertory Test: A Demonstration

As an example of how to assess personality from a social cognitive point of view, consider the **Role Construct Repertory Test**, devised by George Kelly on the basis of his **Personal Construct Theory** of personality. The "**Rep Test**" proceeds in four (4) phases. Now, this is an academic exercise only. Nobody in the class will see this unless you expressly show it to them. At the end, though, we'll give you some ideas as to how you might analyze this data the way Kelly would to analyze an individual's **personal construct system**.

In Phase 1, you see a set of abstract person categories, which Kelly labeled as **roles**. These include your mother and father (or the people who played this part in the person's life), your spouse or romantic partner, and lots of other familiar social roles. Please fill in each role with the name of an actual person who exemplifies this role in your life. If you haven't had any experience with such a role (for example, you haven't had a work supervisor), select someone who comes close to exemplifying that role (for example, an athletic coach or a band conductor). Don't repeat any names. There are 25 roles, numbered 0-24. For Role #0, just write "Myself".

In Phase 2, you see sets of three roles, indicated by circles. Think of an important way in which two of those people are alike, and different from the third. Write this characteristic in the column marked "**Emergent**". So, for example, for **Sort 1**, think of **Yourself**, a **Teacher You Liked**, and a **Teacher You Disliked**. Then, think of the **opposite** of that characteristic, and write that in the column marked "**Implicit**". The opposite of the emergent might not be what you would find in a dictionary. For example, you might say that you and the teacher you liked were both "Female", and the teacher you disliked was a "Male". Whatever you think: That's the point of the exercise. Repeat this process, for a total of 25 "Sorts" In any particular application of the Rep Test, there could be more than 25 sorts, but there are usually at least 15.

You can use the same constructs twice, if that seems appropriate to you. Or, you can pair the same emergent construct with two or more different implicit constructs. For example, if you were comparing **Your Mother**, **Your Brother**, and **Your Sister**, you might choose "Women" as the emergent construct and "Younger" as the implicit construct. Whatever seems most appropriate. The important thing is that your entries reflect the way you really think about the people involved: how two of them are similar, but different from the third.

In the interests of time, skip Phase 3, and go straight to **Phase 4**. But for the record, Kelly would ask the subject to review the grid and place a checkmark to indicate every role to which each construct applies. For the construct in Sort 1, for example, there are already checkmarks for '**Yourself**' (Role #0), "**Liked Teacher**" (Role #1), and "**Disliked Teacher**" (Role #2), because those were the comparisons you made in Phase 2. But the same construct might also apply to your "**Father**" (Role #7), or to an "**Unlikable Companion**" (Role #19). If so, so just make additional checkmarks as appropriate. If it helps to keep things straight, you can copy the Emergent and Implicit poles of the constructs from the corresponding "Sorts" in Phase 2. *But don't do this now. Proceed straight to Phase 4.*

Turn to the other side of this page.

Finally, for Phase 4, please rate each of the 25 roles (0-24), or rather the person who exemplified each role, on each of the 25 constructs. In other words, rate the degree to which each of the 25 constructs elicited in Phase 2 describes each of the 25 role-exemplars elicited in Phase 1.

To keep things simple, if you think about a person in terms of the Emergent Pole of a construct, give that person a rating of 3. If you think about the person in terms of the Implicit Pole, give that person a rating of 1. If the construct does not apply, or the person really falls in the middle of the dimension represented by those polar terms, give that person a rating of 2. Again, if it helps to keep things straight, you can copy the Emergent and Implicit poles of the constructs from the corresponding “Sorts” in Phase 2.

The format here is a little tricky, because in the previous phases, the columns represented Roles. In Phase 4, the columns represent Constructs. In Column 1, rate each of the Roles, #0-24, on the first construct, whatever it was (e.g., *male-female*). In Column 2, rate each of the roles on the second construct, whatever it was (e.g., *young-old*). And proceed down the list of constructs. If you repeated a construct (e.g., *young-old*), you don't have to repeat the rating: you've already done it. But if you have two similar but not identical constructs (e.g., *young-old* and *young-wise*), then rate each role on both constructs.

Actually, again for the record, Kelly's procedure would differ from what we're doing here. He'd ask subjects to rate the relevance of each construct to each role, not the descriptiveness of the construct. But, frankly, that would already have been done in Phase 3. In this exercise, I've modified Phase 4 so that it looks more like a traditional impression-formation exercise.

Analysis. OK, that's it so far as the section exercise is concerned. But if you have access to statistical software such as SPSS or MatLab, you can subject the ratings you made in Phase 4 to a procedure known as factor analysis.

- Enter the different roles as if they were different “Subjects”, and the different constructs as “Variables”.
- Factor analysis computes the correlations among the Variables, and will extract the basic dimensions underlying your ratings.
 - If, to take an extreme example, you used only one construct in Phase 2, like “like-dislike” or “male-female”, only one dimension will emerge. Kelly would call this a “monolithic” personal construct system.
 - If you used both of these constructs, but it turned out that you “liked” every female and “disliked” every male, you'd still get only one monolithic construct.
 - But if you used both of these constructs, and you “liked” males and females in roughly equal proportions, then these would emerge as two separate constructs.
- The number of dimensions revealed by the factor analysis gives a measure of the complexity of your personal construct system.

Phase 1: List Exemplars, People Known to You Personally, of Each of the Following Roles	
Role	Exemplar
0. Yourself	
1. A teacher you liked	
2. A teacher you disliked	
3. Your wife (husband) or present girlfriend (boyfriend)	
4. An employer, supervisor, or officer under whom you worked or served and whom you found it had to get along with	
5. An employer, supervisor, or officer under whom you worked or served and whom you liked	
6. Your mother, or the person who has played the part of a mother in your life	
7. Your father, or the person who has played the part of a father in your life	
8. Your brother nearest your age, or the person who has been most like a brother	
7. Your sister nearest your age, or the person who has been most like a sister	
10. A person with whom you have worked who was easy to get along with	
11. A person with whom you have worked who was hard to understand	
12. A neighbor with whom you get along well	
13. A neighbor whom you find hard to understand	
14. A boy you got along well with when you were in high school	
15. A girl you got along well with when you were in high school	
16. A boy you did not like when you were in high school	
17. A girl you did not like when you were in high school	
18. A person of your own sex whom you would enjoy having as a companion on a trip	
19. A person of your own sex whom you would dislike having as a companion on a trip	
20. A person with whom you have been closely associated recently who appears to dislike you	
21. The person whom you would most like to be of help to	
22. The most intelligent person whom you know personally	
23. The most successful person whom you know personally	
24. The most interesting person whom you know personally	

Phase 2: Compare Roles																													
Role	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	Sort	Emergent	Implicit	
0. Yourself	0	0	0																							1			
1. Teacher -- liked				0			0			0																2			
2. Teacher -- disliked					0				0				0													3			
3. Paramour							0					0					0									4			
4. Employer -- hard to get along with																	0				0			0	5				
5. Employer -- liked.											0						0						0		6				
6. Mother								0						0						0						7			
7. Father	0					0															0					8			
8. Brother			0								0						0									9			
9. Sister		0													0								0			10			
10. Co-worker -- easy to get along with					0														0						0	11			
11. Co-worker -- hard to understand									0								0	0								12			
12. Neighbor -- get along well	0								0														0			13			
13. Neighbor -- hard to understand							0						0						0							14			
14. Boy -- got along well		0												0									0			15			
15. Boy -- got along well				0								0						0								16			
16. Boy -- did not like										0					0						0					17			
17. Girl -- did not like						0								0											0	18			
18. Enjoyable companion				0																0				0		19			
19. Unlikable companion	0							0							0											30			
20. Person who dislikes you										0			0									0				21			
21. Person whom you'd like to help					0						0							0								22			
22. Most intelligent person						0								0										0		23			
23. Most successful person	0							0												0						24			
24. Most interesting person			0									0										0				25			

Phase 3: Apply Constructs to Roles																														
Role	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	Sort	Emergent	Implicit		
0. Yourself	√	√	√																								1			
1. Teacher -- liked				√			√			√																		2		
2. Teacher -- disliked					√				√				√															3		
3. Paramour							√					√					√											4		
4. Employer -- hard to get along with																		√				√			√		5			
5. Employer -- liked.											√						√							√			6			
6. Mother								√						√						√								7		
7. Father	√					√															√							8		
8. Brother			√								√						√											9		
9. Sister		√													√									√				10		
10. Co-worker -- easy to get along with					√														√						√			11		
11. Co-worker -- hard to understand									√								√	√										12		
12. Neighbor -- get along well	√								√															√				13		
13. Neighbor -- hard to understand							√						√						√									14		
14. Boy -- got along well		√												√										√				15		
15. Boy -- got along well				√								√						√										16		
16. Boy -- did not like										√					√						√							17		
17. Girl -- did not like						√								√												√		18		
18. Enjoyable companion				√																√				√				19		
19. Unlikable companion	√							√							√													30		
20. Person who dislikes you										√			√									√						21		
21. Person whom you'd like to help					√						√							√										22		
22. Most intelligent person						√								√											√			23		
23. Most successful person	√							√												√								24		
24. Most interesting person			√									√										√						25		

Phase 4: Rate Each Role on Each Construct																																	
Role	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	Construct	Emergent = 3		Implicit = 1				
0. Yourself																										1							
1. Teacher -- liked																										2							
2. Teacher -- disliked																										3							
3. Paramour																										4							
4. Employer -- hard to get along with																										5							
5. Employer -- liked.																										6							
6. Mother																										7							
7. Father																										8							
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10. Co-worker -- easy to get along with																										11							
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