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Expressing Myself: An Exploration of Personal Constructs of High-Functioning Adolescents with Autism Spectrum Disorder**Sean Hess**

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Many protocols used for assessing social skills of students with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) are based on behavioral observations (Bowers, Huisinigh, & LoGiudice, 2005, 2007, 2008, 2010; Carrow-Woolfolk, 1999; Constantino & Gruber, 2012; Gresham & Elliott, 2008; Gilliam & Miller, 2006; Kleiman, 2003; Phelps-Terasaki & Phelps-Gunn, 1992). It has been suggested, however, that social cognition encompasses processes underlying observable behaviors (Applegate, 1990; Burleson, Delia, & Applegate, 1995). Such processes include personal constructs, which can be assessed using repertory grids (Kelly, 1955). Personal constructs of five high-functioning teenagers with ASD were explored using repertory grids in this study. With visual structure and verbal scaffolding, all participants successfully engaged in the repertory grid process. It appears that high-functioning adolescents with ASD have well organized, complex construct systems related to social relationships. Data suggest they have a significant understanding of social roles and are interested in social interactions. Repertory grids offer a person-centered view of social cognitive processes, which may provide a starting point for social pragmatic language intervention.

Biography

Sean Hess is a Speech-Language Pathologist at Heartspring School, a residential facility and school for children with special needs in Wichita, Kansas. His clinical experience and research foci include working with students with autism spectrum disorder, students with complex communication needs, adolescent language development, person-centered assessment and interventions, counseling, interprofessional collaboration, and service provision to families.

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