

Autism Speaks: Giving a Voice to the Social Constructs Of Adolescents with Asd

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Many protocols used for assessing social skills of individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) are based on behavioral observations. It has been suggested, however, that social cognition encompasses processes underlying observable behaviors. Such processes include personal constructs and cognitive complexity, which are associated with successful interpersonal communication skills used in social interactions. Personal constructs can be assessed using repertory grids (Kelly, 1955), and cognitive complexity can be assessed using the Role Category Questionnaire (RCQ; Crockett, 1965). Personal constructs and cognitive complexities of high-functioning teenagers with ASD were explored using repertory grids and the Role Category Questionnaire. Five high-functioning adolescents diagnosed with ASD participated in the study. All participants completed the RCQ. Results appeared to be more reflective of interpersonal communication ability rather than overall social cognition. 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 suggests they have a significant understanding of social roles and are interested in social interactions. Repertory grids and the RCQ offer a person-centered view of social cognitive processes, which may provide a starting point for intervention.