

## **Mikael Leiman and Jason Hepple: What is the underlying of CAT? From Semiotic Object Relations Theory (SORT) to metaphor**



Mikael Leiman, PhD, is a professor emeritus in Psychology, Psychotherapy and Counselling at the University of Eastern Finland. He introduced Cognitive Analytic Therapy in Finland and has trained several generations of psychotherapists over four decades. He is also a frequent visitor in the United Kingdom and other European countries, giving workshops on the semiotic understanding of mental actions and communication. Mikael is the developer of dialogical sequence analysis (DSA), a microanalytic research method aimed at exploring how internal mental activity is embodied in expression. It is mainly used in single case psychotherapy and counselling studies.

Currently, Mikael is interested in re-exploring the relationship between CAT concepts and the theoretical formulations of DSA.



Jason Hepple MA FRCPsych studied neuroscience, medicine and psychiatry at the University of Oxford, becoming introduced to CAT through his first supervisor Norma Maple in 1993. Never looking back, CAT became his passion, and he went on to train as a CAT psychotherapist and trainer and evolved into a consultant psychiatrist in psychological therapies in the NHS. He has served ACAT as editor of Reformulation, chair of the Training Committee, chair of ACAT and lead on external liaison with a recent successful petition campaign to secure two million pounds of central NHS funding for CAT training in England. Since his retirement as a

psychiatrist, he continues to contribute as an honorary psychotherapist for Somerset NHS Foundation Trust, the Somerset CAT practitioner training, the University of Exeter CAT Foundation course and the inter-regional UK CAT psychotherapy training.

He is a strong advocate for LGBT+ equality, having been an LGBT+ activist and volunteer during the height of the AIDS pandemic, raising the awareness of LGBT health issues and co-organising one of the first UK LGBT+ health conferences in Oxford in the late 1980s. He is committed to the benefits of face-to-face therapy and teaching and has toyed with starting a face-to-face CAT SIG but is worried that no one would join as he would not be able to advertise it on the internet or host on-line meetings as a matter of principle!

He has contributed over thirty books, papers and chapters on CAT topics including CAT in later life, CAT in groups, a CAT formulation of obsessionality, eight-session CAT and the dialogic heart of CAT (the 'D' in CAT). He draws on overlapping metaphor from science, art, philosophy and literature to enrich and deepen CAT understanding and application.

## Summary of presentation

In the new publication: The Oxford Handbook of Cognitive Analytic Therapy, Eds. L Brummer, M Cavieres, and R Tan, (online edn, Oxford Academic, 19 May 2022),  
<https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780198866572.001.0001>

Mikael Leiman asks the question 'is Semiotic object relations theory (SORT) the basic CAT theory?' He emphasizes that: 'SORT provides an explanation of the power of reformulation as a joint tool of perception and self-reflection. Established collaboratively, the referential web, or the meaning content of reformulation, becomes a vehicle of shared understanding and helps therapists focus their contribution to enhance client self-understanding. The external form of reformulation may vary. TPPs, diagrams, maps, and letters get their power by the activity by which they are generated and when they respect the client's zone of proximal development.'

In an invited response, Jason Hepple questions the need for an underlying theory of CAT based on the integration of semiotics with object relations theory and discusses how CAT theory has developed addressed to the dominant psychoanalytic and scientific discourses of the time and that CAT theory may best be described as a series of overlapping metaphors with their roots in dialogism, science and the arts.

The workshop will expand on this dialogue between Mikael and Jason and allow its continuance through open discussion with those attending.