The 2012 Leona Tyler Award Address: Constructing Careers— Actors, Agents, and Authors Ψ

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Abstract

Thomas Kuhn (1996), the historian of science, referred to a paradigm as a pattern of conceptual models and dominant practices that characterize a particular historical period. The present article traces the evolution and compares three major paradigms for career intervention, namely the formist paradigm of modernity's vocational guidance for the actor, the organismic paradigm of high modernity's career education for the agent, and the contextual paradigm of post-modernity's life designing for the author. Each of these paradigms has a distinct discourse that engages clients with a standard rhetoric and skill repertoire. Vocational guidance, from the *objective* perspective of individual differences, views clients as *actors* who may be characterized by *scores* on *traits* and who may be helped to match themselves to occupations that employ people whom they *resemble*. Career education, from the *subjective* perspective of individual development, views clients as *agents* who may be characterized by their degree of *readiness* to engage developmental *tasks* appropriate to their life *stages* and who may be helped to implement new attitudes, beliefs, and competencies that foster their vocational adaptation. Life design, from the *project* perspective of social constructionism, views clients as

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authors who may be characterized by autobiographical *stories* and who may be helped to *reflect* on life *themes* with which to reconstruct their careers. Depending upon a client's personal needs and social context, practitioners may apply career interventions that reflect different paradigms: vocational guidance to identify occupational fit, career education to foster vocational adaptation, or life design to construct a career story.

Keywords

career counseling, life design, guidance

As you know, paid work is a core role in our society because it influences identity and lifestyle. Each time that society has changed the prevalent form of employment, psychology has changed its methods of career intervention to help people deal with new identity issues and lifestyle problems. In this regard, psychology follows the advice of a South African saying, "When the music changes, so must the dance." In psychology we call the dance a paradigm. It means a pattern of conceptual models and dominant practices that characterize a particular historical period (Kuhn, 1996). Today, I want to tell the story of the three paradigms that I have danced with in my career, namely, modernity's vocational guidance for the actor, high modernity's career education for the agent, and postmodernity's life designing for the author. Each of these three paradigms for career intervention has a distinct discourse that engages clients with a standard rhetoric and skill repertoire.

Vocational Guidance for the Actor

The first paradigm that patterned my professional practice was vocational guidance. My beginnings in career intervention came as a surprise to me. In March 1970, while I was waiting to begin my school psychology internship at John Carroll University, the Director of the Counseling Center, Walter Nosal, asked me if I wanted to fill-in temporarily for a counselor who quit unexpectedly. I said, "Of course." As I entered the center the next day, a student followed me through the door. Nosal said to me, "There is your office and here is your first client." The student requested career counseling. Being trained in school psychology, I wondered how to proceed.

Nosal advised me to administer a battery of tests that included the Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale, Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory, Strong Vocational Interest Blank, and Study of Values. After I scored the tests, he coached me on what to say to the client. For the next 5 years,

Nosal—a master trait-and-factor counselor—tutored me in the psychology of individual differences. I became highly skilled at test interpretation. I even wrote two short clinical interpretation manuals, one for the *Study of Values*, which I never published, and another one for the *Strong Vocational Interest Blank* (Savickas, 1977), which became my first publication. I went along thinking that test interpretation was career counseling. Today, I realize that I provided vocational guidance.

The guidance paradigm rests on the construct of resemblance. Counselors guide the lost by recognizing who they resemble and then advising them to explore occupations in which similar people work. Edward Lee Thorndike was among the first to expound this approach in his 1911 book titled *Individuality*. The approach came to be known as differential psychology. According to Thorndike (1911), psychologists study individual differences "among common humanity" (p. 2) to establish facts and laws to apply in assisting individuals.

To better understand this paradigm for vocational guidance, I locate it in Stephen Pepper's (1942) model of world hypotheses. Pepper's philosophical system provides a means of identifying the epistemological position that subsumes guidance theory and techniques. In Pepper's system, vocational guidance expresses the paradigm named "formism." With its root metaphor of similarity or type, formism attempts to answer the question "What is it like?" by categorizing and classifying objects in the world. Its truth criterion is correspondence or congruence.

After deciding to forgo an internship in school psychology and remain in the counseling center, I took a course in career counseling with Lee Hoover. I learned that John Holland had creatively applied the formism paradigm to vocational guidance. Using Adler's (1927) idea of lifestyle, Holland (1997) formed six personality prototypes that incorporated six value types (Spranger, 1914) and six vocational stereotypes (Guilford, Christensen, Bond, & Sutton, 1954).

I have long admired Holland's simple and succinct yet masterful method of matching people to prototypes to determine their degree of resemblance to workers in various occupations. There is nothing better for vocational guidance. This is why I believe that the training of new career counselors should follow the historical evolution of the profession. Ontogeny should recapitulate phylogeny in the sense that new counselors should be well trained in individual differences and vocational guidance before learning a second paradigm.

For his course, Dr. Hoover used a new book written by one of his professors at the University of Iowa. John Crites's (1969) *Vocational Psychology* was the wrong book for a first class in vocational guidance yet the right book for me. Crites's book introduced me to Holland's differential psychology of

occupations and Super's developmental psychology of careers. Crites's book inspired me to pursue a doctorate in vocational psychology. However, it took me 3 years to find a doctoral program that would admit me. Finally, a generative professor at Kent State University agreed to be my advisor in the guidance and counseling program. Glenn Saltzman cautioned me that he taught only one course in vocational guidance but we could improvise. I should mention that this was when doctoral students in counseling planned their course of study rather than follow curricula mandated by licensing boards. Glenn asked me with whom else I would like to study. I answered Super, Crites, and Holland. He instructed me to ask them if I could visit their universities for a semester. So, during my 2nd year of doctoral studies, I registered for two independent investigations. During the fall semester, I went to the University of Maryland where I began work with Crites on a book titled *Career Decision Making: Teaching the Process* (Savickas & Crites, 1981). During the spring semester I went to Teachers College, Columbia University, to work with Super on the Career Pattern Study 20-year follow-up.

Saltzman also arranged for me to teach a course with Super, Crites, Holland, and Osipow each coming to Kent to present a 2-day workshop as part of that course. Later, Super and Holland codesigned my doctoral dissertation on the role of interest consistency in vocational maturity. Saltzman—a gifted teacher and my dissertation sponsor—continued to coach me in lecturing and public speaking, even after I graduated. I remain grateful for his mentoring and friendship.

Career Education for the Agent

During my doctoral studies, Super's developmental psychology fascinated me. I became a Super acolyte in the mid-1970s and spent the 1980s and early 1990s working closely with and learning from both Donald Super and John Crites, who I revere as my intellectual grandfather and father, respectively. They inducted me into the second paradigm of my career. They called it career counseling, but dare I say they were imprecise—a point I will return to shortly. With Super's encouragement, I learned to view clients from their own perspective. Holland had taught me to take an objective view of individuals as actors on occupational stages whereas Super and Crites taught me to take a subjective view of individuals as agents who manage their own careers. I studied extensively the coping behaviors that agents may use to meet developmental tasks and occupational transitions. In particular, I became interested in future time perspective and the associated career education intervention of increasing planfulness. However, with changes in society

that have prompted the individualization of the life course (Beck, 2002), I no longer preach planfulness for a stable 30-year career but instead promote adaptability for possibilities, or as Bob Lent (in press) likes to say "prepared-ness." I still research vocational development. Recently, I published the fourth edition of Crites' *Career Maturity Inventory* (Crites & Savickas, 2011), which measures the development of career choice readiness.

Development is a central construct in the second paradigm that I have danced with. Pepper refers to the paradigm as organismic with its root meta-phor of organic development through progressive stages. It attempts to answer the question, "How does it develop?" The organismic paradigm posi-tions individuals as agents who produce their own development. From this perspective, development rises from within, and as Super often said "careers unfold" as individuals "discover who they are," and "manifest a self."

So, in my early experience, I relied on the formism paradigm in the guise of a vocational guidance that concentrates on whom the client resembles. In mid-career, I danced with the organic paradigm in the guise of a career education that concentrates on developing the agency to manage one's own career. Super called it career counseling, but rarely has it been about counseling. It is career development education—career education for short—and practitioners who work with adults may call it career coaching. Career education, preparation, and coaching help individuals develop the attitudes, beliefs, and competencies that they need to make viable career choices and realistic work adjustments.

Career Counseling for the Author

My first paradigm for career services is vocational guidance with the actor while the second paradigm is career education with the agent. My third para-digm is career counseling with the author. As I moved into this paradigm, Wittgenstein's (1963) ideas about *language games* helped me to understand the discourse's rhetoric and reasoning. Language is not a passive thing to be absorbed, it is something that is a part of us. We shape the use of language as language shapes us. We live in language. Super and Crites demonstrated the shaping power of language by changing the name of vocational guidance to career development and counseling. They did so, in large part, because Super wanted to concentrate on careers rather than occupations, and in small part because Crites was tired of having his *Vocational Development Inventory* being called the VD inventory. Soon thereafter, the *Vocational Guidance Quarterly* was renamed the *Career Development Quarterly*, to the lament of Holland and Weinrach (1987), who published an editorial against the name change.

The term *career development* was and is fine, when it connotes psychosocial education about vocational development. However, our language became sloppy when career development education or career education became career counseling. This loose language and slippage in meaning has hindered the recruitment of students to our discipline. We continued to do vocational guidance, yet then called it career counseling. Students who want to do counseling prefer not to do vocational guidance disguised as career counseling. We have many articles and symposia discussing why we do not attract more graduate students to the career field but never have really addressed the distraction caused by referring to vocational guidance as career counseling.

Arnold Spokane first stated this idea in 1992 at the inaugural conference of the Society for Vocational Psychology when he asserted that we have theories of career choice and development but we do not have theories of career counseling. Arnie was right and his bold assertion turned my career in a new direction. Asking the question, "Where is the counseling in career counseling?" marked a turning point that led me to a third paradigm with which I am now dancing. However, naming this third paradigm for career intervention has been challenging. To me it is career counseling, yet I have called it career construction counseling or life designing because the term *career counseling* has been confounded by surplus meanings.

Life designing turns from the scientific conception of objects and subjects to the social construction of projects. From this perspective, work life is viewed as a series of projects.

Career is a story that people tell about the projects that occupy them. They author a story about themselves as actors and as agents in the theater of work. The intervention of counseling focuses clients' reflection on themes in their career story and then extends the themes into the future. It may recognize similarity, and it may promote readiness, yet counseling mainly uses reflexive process and thematic content to design a life. It is about uniqueness more than resemblance and emotion more than reasoning.

Eventually 20 years after seeing that first client at John Carroll University, my ideas came together in a theory of vocational behavior that I now call career construction and in a theory of career counseling that I call life designing. As I reflected on my career for this talk, I realized that I actually unwittingly yet unwaveringly followed the path charted by Super and Crites. Don wanted to integrate his segmental theories of vocational development someday. I think I may have done that using social constructionism to unite them (Savickas, 2005; Savickas, 2013). Jack wanted to develop something he called career therapy. I think he might like life design counseling (Savickas, 2011, 2012). So, as I look back, I think I have elaborated and extended the work of my masters. What I have also tried to do is merge their contributions

by explicating a theory of career counseling rooted in a theory of vocational behavior. I realized that Spokane was correct. Vocational psychology—while providing much for vocational guidance and career education—offers less to career counseling. Accordingly, I turned to constructionist philosophy and narrative psychology.

Career as Story

My career counseling sessions slowly moved away from psychometric scores to personal stories. I focused increasingly on interview questions that prompt clients to narrate their autobiographies. I would ask clients about their role models, favorite magazines, how they made important decisions, and what their parents wanted for their lives (Savickas, 1981). Over time, I discovered the intricate work of David Tiedeman. It took me a decade to realize that Tiedeman was not a self-concept theorist like Donald Super but a self-construction theorist like George Kelly. I had studied Kelly's (1955) psychology of personal constructs in graduate school and in 1980 applied it to careers in a short book titled *Career Consciousness*. In that monograph, I defined career as the construction of meaning through work-role self-consciousness and began to write about adaptation rather than maturation. But I lacked the competence and confidence to publish it. Over time, my assuredness grew as I learned more about constructivism from the Neimeyer brothers—Bob and Greg. I applied their ideas on reconstructing meaning to career counseling. Later, Dan McAdam's work on the psychology of narratives concentrated my attention on client stories. Kelly, Tiedeman, the Neimeyers, and McAdams all dance with a third paradigm. This paradigm evinces an epistemological position that Pepper named contextualism. With the root metaphor of an act in context, it views individuals as constantly changing in the midst of ongoing events in a dynamic world. The contextual paradigm attempts to answer the question, "How does it happen?" And its truth criterion is a pragmatic effectiveness or "successful working." From the contextualist perspective, validity comes from particulars and distinctions in contrast to the formist perspective in which validity comes from abstractions and classifications. Thus, the third paradigm concentrates on uniqueness, not resemblance.

Individual Differences Versus Individuality

In the same year that Thorndike (1911) published *Individuality*, William Stern (1911) published a book titled *Methodological Foundations of*

Differential Psychology. Thorndike equated individuality with individual differences. His view prevailed during the 20th century. However, Stern differentiated between individuality and individual differences, calling for two distinct methods for studying persons. In the study of individual differences, the object of study is attributes and individuals are the means. When the object of study is individuals, attributes are the means. Studies of individual differences in variables such as occupational interests and vocational maturity artificially dismember individual subjects and objectify them as scores on variables—a critical contribution to vocational guidance. However, these investigations contribute less to career counseling because while they begin with individual persons serving as research subjects, the investigators quickly forget individual persons and concentrate on variables. The meaning of career is lost in the study of fragmentary parts rather than living wholes. For Stern, when the object of study is differences between individuals, the results are knowledge of no one.

The social learning theorist John Dollard (1949), writing in 1949, aptly noted that in this type of research, "the individual is lost in the crowd" (p. 5). We could paraphrase Dollard's statement as "the individual's career is lost in the crowd of vocational variables." Individual difference variables are differences not individuals. To advance the study of career services, vocational psychologists might apply the contextualist paradigm of persons to career counseling research as rigorously as they have applied the formist paradigm of parts to vocational guidance research.

In preparing this presentation, I wanted to mention Leona Tyler. The award was named in her honor by a fellow Minnesotan and an admirer of her contributions to differential psychology, namely, John Holland. I wonder what John would say as I now assert that Leona Tyler (1947) danced with the three paradigms before any of us. She published her masterwork on *The Psychology of Human Differences* in 1947, then in 1959 with Florence Goodenough published a book titled *Developmental Psychology*. By 1978, she had moved to the third paradigm in her book called *Individuality*—titled the same as Thorndike's 1911 classic but recommending Stern's view of individuals rather than Thorndike's view of individual differences. She asserted that the approach taken by differential psychology loses the uniqueness of individuals. Tyler (1978) called for a scientific study of individuality. She wrote,

> Individuals create themselves. To understand a person completely, we would need to trace the road he or she has taken on one occasion after another. It is development we must study, but development of the shaper rather than the shaped. (pp. 233-234)

Life Design: A Paradigm for Career Counseling

Psychology of the shaper not the shaped is the essence of the life design paradigm. As the form of work changes from stability to mobility to meet the labor needs of postcorporate societies, so too must the form of career intervention change. The paradigms of guiding and preparing now must be supplemented with a new paradigm that fully addresses the life designing needs of workers in societies that have de-standardized the life course and de-jobbed employment. In the words of Tyler (1972), counseling psychologists'

> first major task is to help individuals reduce the confusion they find in their lives by organizing vaguely-sensed possibilities into feasible alternatives and choosing the lifestyles that meet their needs, the cause they wish to serve, and the kinds of experiences they want their lives to include. (p. 10)

The task described by Tyler requires a science of intervention that deals with making a self, shaping an identity, constructing a career, and designing a life. Accordingly, life design presents a new paradigm for career intervention that aims to enhance the ability to decide and to act by reducing confusion and clarifying possibilities (Savickas, 2012). It concentrates on helping clients envision how to use work to actively master what they passively suffer. Thus, life designing helps individuals to fit work into life rather than life into work. To do so, the paradigm for life design intervention first examines through small stories how an individual has constructed a career, then deconstructs and reconstructs these stories into an identity narrative, and finally coconstructs intentions that lead to action in the real world. Let us briefly consider these three elements in turn, starting with construction of a career story.

Construction

When individuals are dislocated from their current stories, they begin narrative processing of their biographies (Heinz, 2002). Some individuals seek counseling to assist them in this identity work. I am amazed at how most often a client's opening statement includes the exact ending we will get to. They will keep going in the direction they are already headed. People seem to know implicitly more about their life path than they can tell explicitly. So life designing seeks to enhance narratability, that is, increase clients' ability to tell their stories and perform their identities. Thus, the process of counseling helps clients hear what they already know. And then, what they already

Table 1. The Career Construction Interview

The Career Construction Interview			
Scene	A.	How can I be useful to you as you construct your career?	**Act**
Self	1.	Who did you admire when you were growing up?	**Actor**
Stage	2.	What attracts you to your favorite magazines or TV shows?	**Agent**
Script	3.	What is your favorite book or movie? Tell me the story.	**Author**
Rehearsal	4.	Tell me your favorite saying or motto.	**Advice**
Back-Story	5.	What is your earliest recollection?	**Arc**

know must become clarified if it is to enhance their ability to decide and act. This is where Wittgenstein's philosophy of psychology offers grand advice to counselors: Problems are solved not by giving information but by rearranging what we already know. This heuristic idea focuses my current research and reflection.

So when clients fall out of story, how do counselors help them articulate what they already know and find what they did not lose? Simply stated, practitioners may follow Wittgenstein's advice and rearrange the past story to meet present needs. Remember that the career problem faced by a client cannot be solved using the same story that created and maintains the problem. To begin, counselors ask clients to chronicle the micronarratives that they have used to construct their self, identity, and career. These fundamental self-making stories are the base materials that counselors will rearrange to understand the heart of the matter and discuss what is at stake in the choices to be made. There are many narrative means to help clients articulate the base materials that they used as sources for self-construction.

Over the last 40 years, I have tried many different methods and dozens of stimulus questions. Now, I use a framework of five questions listed in Table 1 to elicit stories about sources of the self. I ask about role models to have clients narrate their self-concepts; I ask about preferred magazines or television programs to identify manifest interests; I ask about current favorite story from a book or movie to learn how they are scripting the next chapter in their career; I ask about repeated proverbs to hear their best advice about initiating action; and finally, I ask about early recollections to place the current concerns in the

context of their life themes. These five questions erect a scaffold for reassembling career and life stories. They prompt concrete examples of abstract claims about life and provide a reference background of values with which to remake meaning that moves them forward. Telling their stories focuses clients' self-awareness and hearing their own stories invites reflection on what matters most.

Reconstruction

In reconstructing a macronarrative from the set of five micronarratives, the client is the architect, and the counselor is a carpenter. As Wittgenstein (1963) stated, problems are solved by rearranging what we already know. Career counseling consists of helping clients to selectively and creatively reconstruct an identity narrative by remembering or reassembling the past to suit present needs and support future aspirations. Narrative processing of identity constructions gathers threads of meaning from familiar small stories and weaves them together into a large story with a tapestry of deeper meaning. Integration of micronarratives about the self reconstructs a new macronarrative about identity. This reconstruction makes amendments to correct mistaken ideas, adjustments to soothe old conflicts, and alterations to enhance self-efficacy. The emerging narrative identity, with old elements combined in new ways, imposes order by highlighting strands of continuity and amplifying patterns of meaning that lead to renewed purpose in a changed world.

Coconstruction

Counseling then concentrates clients' reflection on the reconstructed identity narrative. Client and counselor collaborate in refining the portrait to candidly and effectively address the concerns that the client brought to counseling. They join together to craft moves in meaning that clarify priorities, mobilize central tendencies, and prompt transformation. The coconstructed identity narrative provides new meanings that restart stalled initiatives and open fresh possibilities. The tighter coherence and distilled clarity makes clients' intentions more apparent to themselves and their counselors. With this reassembled story, clients may readily form new intentions out of old tensions and begin to enact the next chapter in their lives. This purposeful action—this behavior infused with meaning—prompts further self-making, identity shaping, and career constructing. As clients go further and deeper into the world, their actions answer the questions they brought to counseling. If you would like to try the life designing method, then begin by using the free workbook titled *My Career Story* (Savickas & Hartung, 2012).

Table 2. Career Intervention Discourses: Rhetoric and Repertoires

Vocational Guidance	Career Education	Career Counseling
Formist Difference	Organismic Development	Contextual Design
Object	Subject	Project
Actor	Agent	Author
Traits	Tasks	Themes
Self-Matching	Self-Implementing	Self-Making
Resemblance	Readiness	Reflexivity

Conclusion

At this point, I will try to carefully summarize what I have said so as not to incite any epistemic war. The contextual paradigm of life design does not replace but rather takes its place alongside the formist paradigm of vocational guidance and the organismic paradigm of career education and preparation. Career intervention paradigms, as shown in Table 2, each have a distinct discourse that engages clients using a standard rhetoric, reasoning, and repertoire.

Vocational guidance, from the *objective* perspective of individual differences, views clients as *actors* who may be characterized by *scores* on *traits* and who may be helped to match themselves to occupations that employ people whom they *resemble*. Career education, from the *subjective* perspective of individual development, views clients as *agents* who may be characterized by their degree of *readiness* to engage developmental *tasks* appropriate to their life *stages* and who may be helped to implement new attitudes, beliefs, and competencies that foster their vocational adaptation. Life design, from the *project* perspective of social constructionism, views clients as *authors* who may be characterized by autobiographical *stories* and who may be helped to *reflect* on life *themes* with which to reconstruct their careers.

Depending on a client's personal needs and social context, practitioners may apply career interventions that reflect different paradigms: vocational guidance to identify occupational fit, career education to foster vocational adaptation, or life design to construct a career story. Each paradigm for career intervention is valuable and effective for its intended purpose. Choreographing career intervention paradigms in Pepper's (1942) philosophical system has refined my language and sharpened my thinking. I invite you to join me in

studying this choreography as a means to dance with a new paradigm and reconstruct our view of career intervention. Similar to clients during a time of transition, we must reassemble our discourse to remain relevant in a changing context. We might begin this reflection and renewal by acknowledging the paradigms in which we live as well as distinguishing when and with whom to use the distinct career services of guiding and advising, educating and coaching, and counseling and designing.

Our inquiry should critically examine the metaphorical language that expresses more truth than we realize when we use the words *guide, educate*, and *counsel*. This collaborative coconstruction could impose deeper meaning on our own vocational behavior and advance the career of career intervention. Furthermore, presenting a differentiated view of career intervention paradigms and practices in counseling books and courses might also inspire our students. They own the future. In closing, I want to say to the students who are here today that I envy you because you will make the moves in meaning needed to advance our profession and because you will eventually live through a fourth paradigm when the music changes yet again and society needs you to choreograph a new dance. If I can help you, as I have been helped by our predecessors, just let me know.

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Bio

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