CAREER CONSTRUCTION THEORY

Mark L. Savickas

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Career Construction Theory

Career Construction Theory (CCT; Savickas, 2002, 2020) presents a connected set of terms and statements that constitute a way of thinking and talking about careers in the global economy and multicultural societies of the 21st century. CCT systematizes, in a formal and functional manner, knowledge about how individuals make themselves and build their careers. The bedrock tenet of CCT pronounces that adaptation is the master motive in the social lives of individuals. Thus, the theory explains the interpretive and interpersonal processes through which individuals organize themselves, impose direction on their vocational behavior, and make meaning of their careers.

CCT is a scientific theory in the academic *discipline* of vocational psychology. As a psychological theory, CCT explains and predicts a number of interrelated phenomena concerning vocational behavior and career development. Practitioners in the *profession* of career counseling apply CCT in a counseling discourse called Career Construction Counseling (CCC). I use the term "counseling discourse" instead of "counseling theory" to emphasize CCC's focus on practice-based knowledge and observable outcomes rather than CCT's focus on scientific measurement, prediction, and experimentation As a discourse in the profession of counseling, CCC provides language and definitions with which practitioners may speak and write about practices, procedures, and processes of career intervention. Readers who are interested in CCC are referred to a book published by the American Psychological Association (Savickas 2019a) or a practice manual (Savickas, 2019b). The present monograph presents the definitive explication of CCT, beginning with its fundamental meta-theory.

Career Construction Meta-Theory

CCT incorporates existing knowledge about careers and their development using the inductive method (Locke, 2007). The theory serves as an interpretive repertoire that organizes an inter-related set of terms and coherent ideas about the topic of career. As an "empirical integration" (Underwood, 1957, p. 290) of existing knowledge, CCT requires an explicit theoretic scheme to narrow delineation of the domain, identify relevant findings, and notice unforeseen relationships. To achieve this coherence, CCT situates, evaluates, and

interprets research and reflection about vocational behavior and its development within an explicit meta-theory that explains the architecture of CCT itself, hence the prefix "meta-" as a theory about a theory. The CCT meta-theoretical matrix represents a selection of special cases rather than a general meta-theoretical model. The meta-theory provides a grounding foundation and overarching framework that both sustain and constrain the theory.

CCT's meta-theory addresses two basic questions, one about content and the other about process. The content question asks, What are the concepts used to understand the phenomenon? The process question asks, How do the concepts function and change? To answer the two questions, CCT's conceptual model identifies the content that constitutes career construction while its process model explains the mental operations that organize, operate, and maintain career constructing. Both the conceptual and process models concentrate on the self as a psychological construct. From an epistemic stance of constructionism, the meta-theory regards the self as a fundamental concept in the behavioral and social sciences (Leary & Tangney, 2003). CCT defines the self not as an entity but as a mental process that enables people to take themselves as an object of attention and think consciously about their characteristics, motives, and experiences. The self as knower internalizes social content including cultural symbols, language, and practices. According to CCT's meta-theory the *knower's processes* produce the *known content* of the psychological self as the "I" observes the "Me" (James, 1892; Taylor, 1989).

To situate, articulate, and integrate the processes and products that foster adaptation, CCT's meta-theory uses two existing meta-theoretical frameworks, basing its process model on Ford's (1987) Living Systems Framework and basing its conceptual model on Bakan's (1966) two fundamental modes of social perception and adaptation. The CCT meta-theory inter-relates these two models using McAdam's (1995) overarching framework of psychological selves.

Meta-Theoretical Process Model

The meta-theory process model adopts Donald Ford's Living Systems Framework (LSF) to explain how the CCT's career constructing processes form, function, and change. The meta-theory of the LSF has been applied previously to several psychological theories (Ford & Ford, 1987), including theories that concentrate on development (D. H. Ford & Lerner, 1992), motivation (M.E. Ford, 1992), vocational behavior (Vondracek, Ford, & Porfeli, 2014), and career guidance

(Vondracek & Ford, 2019a; Vondracek, Porfeli, & Ford, 2019). The LSF in CCT's meta-theory's process model concentrates on career constructing, that is, the mental processes that guide, produce, and make sense of people's vocational patterns and pathways. In comprehending how individuals construct their characteristics, motives, and experiences, CCT highlights the information-processing functions of self-organizing, self-regulating, and self-conceiving. These three self-making, autopoietic processes enable individuals to deal with career changes and challenges. The impetus to adapt activates these self-constructing processes of organizing, regulating, and conceiving to elaborate and revise existing vocational patterns, occupational plans, and career themes.

Self-organizing encompasses the mental processes by which individuals selectively become aware of, differentiate, and inter-relate their knowledge, competencies, beliefs, and experiences to form schematic and strategic repertoires of similar content in similar contexts (Vondracek, & Ford, 2019b). These self-organized repertoires of perceptions, dispositions, and behaviors provide the basis for self-consistency, that is, the temporal continuity in an individual's vocational personality characteristics and the cross-situational regularity in activities. Self-organizing includes the *processes of self-awareness* and *self-evaluation*. Self-awareness enables an individual to observe and recognize oneself as distinct from the environment and from other individuals. When they focus attention on themselves, individuals consciously construct their own characteristics, feelings, and motives. Self-evaluating enables individuals to compare their personal characteristics to internal ideals and their behavior to external standards. The awareness and evaluation processes of self-organizing are instrumental in producing the prototypical repertoires that characterize Holland's (1997) vocational personality types or what Ford calls generalized Behavior Episode Activity Patterns (Ford, 1987).

Self-regulating means control of self by the self. It encompasses the processes of *self-direction* in establishing goals, self-management in guiding one's own behavior, and *self-monitoring* in assessing progress. As self-regulation develops, individuals become increasingly capable of taking primary responsibility for choosing, planning, implementing, and assessing their own experiences. However, "capable" does not mean they necessarily become increasingly self-determining and inner-directed. They may still let family members and other people set their goals and regulate their actions. In any case, self-regulating processes produce decision-making strategies as well as the content of

values, interests, and goals with which individuals identify pathways, make plans, implement strategies, and assess outcomes.

Self-conceiving means composing symbolic representations for making sense of oneself, social roles, and the world. It encompasses *self-representation* to examine internal thoughts and feelings and *self-coherence* to consider what they mean. Self-representation provides symbolic meaning to give form and substance to perceptions, ideas, and emotions. Self-coherence integrates these thoughts and feeling to make one's experiences and ambitions more understandable. Self-conceiving can compose autobiographical identity narratives. These identity narratives or stories about self in particular social roles make meaning and produce insight into life purpose and career themes.

The maturation and arborization of neurons in cortical thickening and thinning are functionally important in improving the capacity for self-constructing processes (Fandakova, Selmeczy, Leckey, Grimm, Wendelken, & Ghetti, 2017). These predictable neurological processes together with life experiences support cognitive development and increasing sophistication in thought.

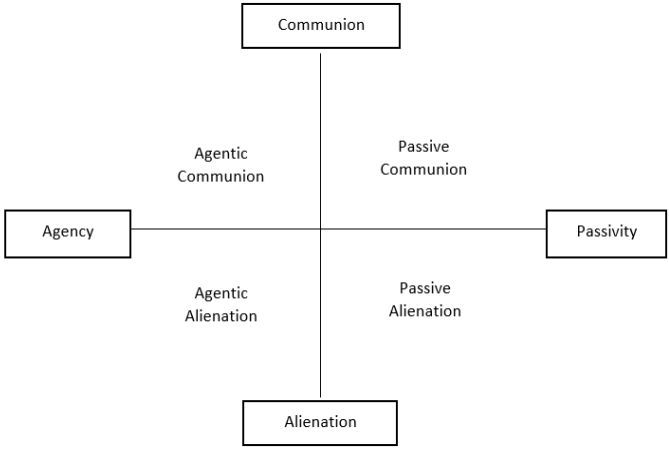
Meta-Theoretical Content Model

The Career Construction meta-theory treats functional patterns of content produced by self-constructing processes separately from the processes themselves. Over time and through repeated use in a particular domain, the mental processes of organizing, regulating, and conceiving form relatively self-sustaining cognitive structures for categorizing information and judging situations. These schemas are formed as individuals recognize commonalities among successive experiences and organize them as a mental structure (Bartlett, 1932; Kelly, 1955). The cognitive schemas then become habitual modes of mental processing that serve as generalized conceptual patterns with which to simplify and interpret complex information. Individuals elaborate and revise their schemas over time based on performance feedback. As a way of thinking about a current situation that resembles prior experiences, individuals use a relevant schema or prior interpretation to focus attention, shape perception, absorb new information, and make judgements. The more important the previous experiences are to a person, the more accessible the schema will be for an analogous current situation. For example, a schema for father may be readily accessible implicit theory for dealing with authority figures later in life. Practitioners of CCC access these schemas as perspectives on the problem revealed in early recollections.

In addition to using schemas to judge social situations, individuals use them to construct psychosocial performance strategies for conducting themselves in particular contexts and specific roles. These performance strategies lead to cross-situational and temporal consistency in thought and behaviors. With time and experience, individuals do elaborate and revise their self-constructed performance strategies based on feedback and what needs to be accomplished. CCT considers the performance strategies to be psychosocial in that they combine psychological (thought) and social (behavior) aspects that direct functioning in society. In CCT, the three major performance strategies are dispositions, adaptability, and identity -- each of which will be described later in this chapter.

The conceptual model in CCT meta-theory postulates that the content of both cognitive schemas and performance strategies are produced by the interaction between two basic ways of judging and adapting to the social world (cf., Blatt & Levy, 2003). The meta-concepts of agency and communion denote the "two fundamental modalities in the existence of living forms" (Bakan, 1966, pp. 114-115) as they interact with their contexts. The meta-concept of agency refers to getting ahead of other people (Hogan, 1983) as manifest through motives such as autonomy, achievement, power, and dominance. Passivity is the opposite pole of agency. The meta-concept of communion refers to getting along with other people (Hogan, 1983) as manifest in motives such as affiliation, cooperation, nurturance, and succorance. Alienation is the opposite pole of communion. The fundamental adaptive modalities of agency to stand out from others and communion to fit in with others are not in opposition; one can value both, neither, or one but not the other. Accordingly, the meta-theoretical conceptual matrix crosses the coordinates of agency and communion in two-dimensional space. Figure 1 depicts the resulting four quadrants in a conceptual matrix. One quadrant represents agency and communion while the diagonal quadrant represents passivity and alienation. The two ambivalent quadrants represent either agency with alienation or passivity with communion.

Figure 1. Meta-Theoretical Conceptual Matrix of Agency and Communion



This meta-theoretical conceptual framework provides a heuristic template for recognizing later developing cognitive schemas and performance strategies employed by psychological selves, each of which is assumed to emerge from the foundational matrix of agentic individuation and communal integration. The specific schemas and strategies serve as "templates of possibility," a term coined by Josselson (2017, p. 22) to denote master narratives with which psychologists may understand a life in progress. The CCT schema and strategy templates are each adapted from pre-existing models and well-established mid-range theories with limited scope that explain a set of phenomena rather than from a grand theory that addresses all phenomena (Locke, 2007). As templates of possibility, the CCT schemas and strategies draw attention to and comprehend career construction processes and content.

Selfhood Framework for Meta-Theoretical Models

The process and content models in the CCT meta-theory are inter-related and coordinated using McAdam's (2013) overarching framework of three different psychological selves. Applying this broad framework systematizes the self-constructing processes and constructed patterns in relation to a psychological self as a (a) social actor who displays distinguishing characteristics while performing

work roles, (b) motivated agent who draws out inner needs to impose direction on vocational behavior, and (c) autobiographical author who makes sense of experience by narrating career stories that reveal themes, clarify purpose, and recognize continuity. In CCT, the three self-constructing processes of organizing, regulating, and conceiving each align *primarily* with the cognitive schemas and performance strategies that characterize one of the psychological selves. Around the age of 18 months, individuals begin to organize a psychological self as a *social actor* with intellectual abilities and personal characteristics, quickly acknowledged by other people in terms of a reputation. Here self-organizing takes the lead yet self-regulating and self-conceiving occur, although in less elaborate forms. By the end of childhood, a second layer of selfhood begins to form. Self-regulating joins more closely with self-organizing to form a self as a *motivated agent* who regulates educational-vocational goals and plans projects to achieve them. In comparison to personal characteristics that describe the social actor, motives explain the actor's behavior. During late adolescence and emerging adulthood, self-conceiving takes an equal place with self-organizing and self-regulating to produce and maintain a self as an *autobiographical author* who composes a career story with increasing clarity, coherence, and continuity.

Within each of the three psychological selves in McAdam's (2013) framework, CCT conceptualizes vocational behavior with two "templates of possibility" formed from related yet different mid-range theories. Each of the three dimensions of actor, agent, and author is characterized by two templates, one facet of a dimension being a cognitive schema and the other facet of that dimension being a performance strategy. Initially, CCT views the career of the social actor through the template of four self-organizing *attachment schemas* (Bowlby, 1982). Then CCT understands the social actor's personality by relating the four attachment schemas to a model of four *dispositional strategies* (Gough, 1990). The term "disposition" refers to unique characteristics within a person that produce, initiate, and guide consistent forms of social behavior (Allport, 1961). In CCT, disposition denotes a preparation, a state of readiness, or a tendency to act in a specific way. For the dimension of the self-regulating motivated agent, CCT uses four motivational schema of *regulatory focus* (Higgins, 1997) that shape the content of the social actor's motives such as needs, interests, and values as well as form performance strategies for adapting to developmental tasks, occupational transitions, and work troubles (Savickas, 2005). For the dimension of the self-conceiving autobiographical author, CCT links the four quadrants in the meta-theoretical matrix to four *reflexive*

schemas for authoring career narratives (Archer, 2012) related to four strategies for performing a *vocational identity* (Marcia, 1980; Berzonsky, 1989; Josselson, 1996). Figure 2 depicts a summary of the self-constructing processes and self-constructed content in each layer of the three psychological selves.

Figure 2. Self-Constructing Processes and Content

Self-Constructing *Process* Leader	**Cognitive Schema *Content***	**Performing Strategy *Content***
Self-Organizing Actor	**Attachment**	**Disposition**
Self-Regulating Agent	**Motivational Focus**	**Adaptability**
Self-Conceiving Author	**Reflexivity**	**Identity**

The foundational matrix specifies that the cognitive schema and performance strategy facets in each layer of a psychological self as actor, agent, and author do not constitute competing nor alternative explanations, rather each one offers a complementary vantage point from which to view career construction processes, products, and patterns. Each of these three pairs of schemas and strategies for understanding vocational behavior and career construction emerges from the foundational matrix and arise as a natural consequence from its predecessor, which is thought to foreshadow what may come next in the course of a career, thus suggesting functional relationships among the layers of the psychological self. The stable structure and analytic power provided by this meta-theoretical matrix enables practitioners and researchers to grasp the sequential emergence, reciprocal interaction, and continuity of career construction schemas and strategies across the life course. Viewing careers through the templates of schemas and strategies inter-related by the matrix of

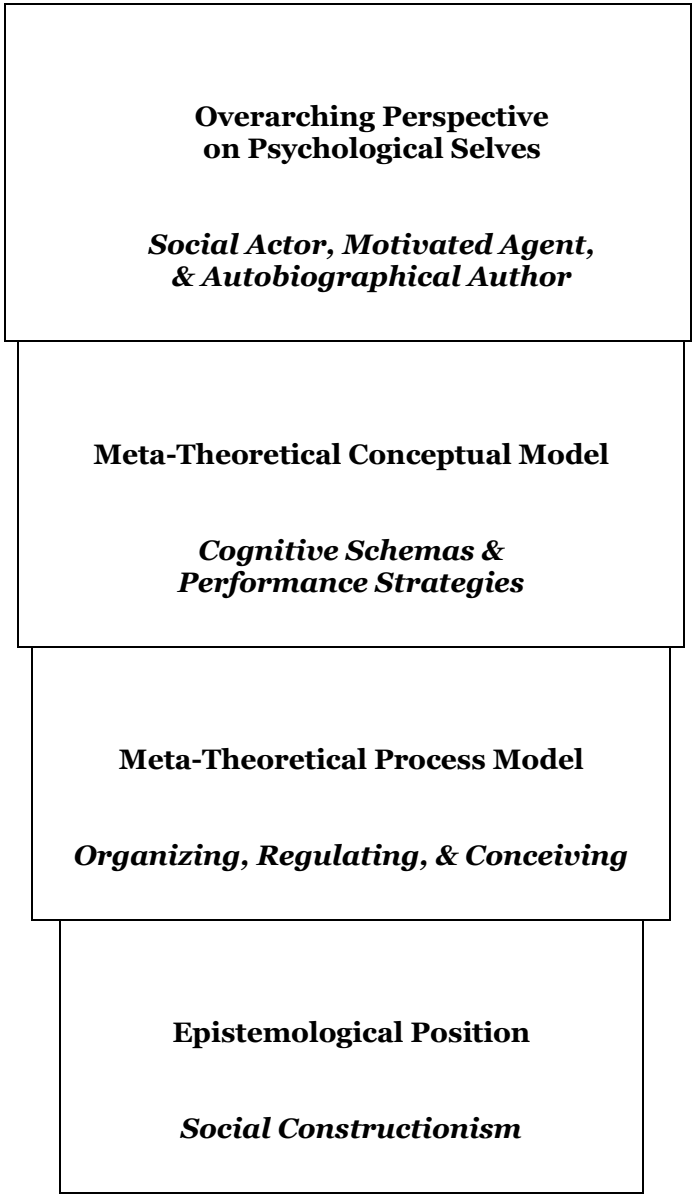
agency and communion enables a deeper and more complete understanding of the complexity, unity, and continuity of an individual's life.

Of course analyzing people's lives in terms of four possible pathways overly simplifies complicated biographies and minimizes individuality. The way that people act in situations and think about themselves in relation to the social world may change over the life course, especially in response to transformations in circumstances, contexts, and experiences. Individuals do not necessarily follow a particular trajectory in lockstep, there can be twists and turns as people migrate to a different path that alters the trajectory of their careers and journey through life. Rotation of the CCT templates of cognitive schemas and performing strategies results in viewing myriad career patterns produced by endless variations in life design. Although for a large portion of individuals, the kaleidoscopic template lenses need not be rotated from their original position in the foundational matrix. The stable framing of life histories enables psychologists to view an individual's trajectory as they move along one of four major pathways mapped by the foundational matrix of agentic individuation and communal integration. The book entitled *Career Construction Theory: Life Portraits of Attachment, Adaptability, and Identity* (Savickas, 2019c) includes four extensive case studies that each illustrate a participant's stable trajectory of career construction, without rotation of later conceptual templates.

In summary, the visual illustration in Figure 3 depicts the unifying architecture of CCT's explicit meta-theory. Practitioners and researchers may use the meta-theory to understand CCT as well as a tool with which to focus thinking and clarify complex problems.

Figure 3. Meta-Theoretical Architecture of

Career Construction Theory



Career Construction Theory Propositions

A theory is a credible set of analytic principles or statements about phenomenon that are designed to guide observation, inform understanding, and provide explanation. In crafting CCT, I have conceptualized vocational behavior and its development by selecting descriptive propositions based on existing research, making CCT an integration of empirical conclusions not a prescriptive theory.

The overarching framework of CCT is structured by three major premises based on McAdam's (2013) conception of three psychological selves. In what follows, each premise is elaborated by CCT propositions [*each denoted by an italicized number*] that describe concise and systematic conclusions based on prior research and reflection. The 45 propositions themselves appear in Appendix A. Appendix B presents a glossary of key terms. The premise for first group of propositions deals with how an individual as a *social actor* uses self-organizing processes to selectively make and maintain characteristics, capabilities, and interactions that eventually shape a career trajectory. The premise for the second group of propositions deals with how an individual as a motivated agent directs and controls educational-vocational behavior through self-regulating processes that shape perceptions, feelings, and actions in pursuit of goals. The premise for the third group of propositions deals with how an individual as an autobiographical author shapes an identity and composes a career story through self-conceiving processes.

The Self-Organizing Social Actor

Premise A: *With their families*, i*ndividuals co-construct a psychological self as a social actor by organizing an attachment schema and dispositional strategy.*

A major concept in all career theories is that the congruence, or fit between a person and environment, influences adaptation to a context. The first situation into which individuals must position themselves is within their families. People are born into dialogues to which they learn to respond and contribute. Beginning in the second year of life, individuals organize and elaborate a psychological self as an actor in the family drama. A sense of self emerges through the process of self-organizing by which an infant begins to shape herself or himself in relation to others in the home. Families teach us who we are. In the words of a former client, "Home is where I became me." CCT considers both how individuals learn to fit into their families as a social actor and

how families prepare children to perform life roles, including the work role. Through primary socialization processes -- such as gendering, relationship patterns, and family values -- parents prepare their children for social roles, launch them on life course trajectories, and guide their initial movement in the world. As children move into society, they carry forward these strategies for living that profoundly influence the paths they make in their careers. In due course, the social roles proffered by society and its institutions structure the context and sequence of events that individuals enact and experience during their lives. The opportunities to perform work roles that individuals perceive are co-constructed by social forces in the family and conditioned by community institutions as well as the momentum propelled by earlier choices and actions [*Proposition 1*].

Individuals learn to perform as social actors in the family drama by introjecting parental influences and coordinating their emotions and intentions with their parents, who serve as *guiding lines* for moving in the social world [*Proposition 2*]. How individuals attach to their parents, and how their parents bond with them in providing nurturance and security, co-constructs the social actor and influences career construction. CCT views how the self-organizing actor develops an attachment schema and dispositional strategy through the meta-dimensional concepts of agency and communion, this time as manifest in the two mid-range models of attachment schemas (Bowlby, 1982) and personality dispositions (Gough, 1987).

Attachment Schema

To make their place in the family and develop personal characteristics, individuals use self-organizing processes to inhabit the cultural discourses and social categories available to them -- such as gender, race, ethnicity, class, and birth order. Through interaction with their parents, children co-construct a working model for understanding themselves, other people, and the world (Bowlby, 1982). In due course, these internal working models form an attachment schema, that is, a generally consistent organization of mental representations that serves as a prime way of thinking about the social world as well as a script for interpersonal interactions and need fulfillment in work roles [*Proposition 3*]. Throughout life, individuals use their attachment schemas as heuristic templates to guide interpersonal relationships, direct attention, interpret events, and generate expectations [*Proposition 4*].

Repeated use of an attachment schema forms psychological needs, some of which are fulfilled through work roles. In their jobs,

individuals use attachment schema formed in the family as an interpretive system to direct need fulfillment as well as interpersonal interactions. Individuals' basic approach to attaching to parents produces a strategy for going forward in life, one that that significantly influences their career plans, patterns, and pathways. Accordingly, CCT proposes that individuals' family functioning anticipates their occupational functioning. As stated by MacGregor and Cochran (1988), "in working, a person re-stages a drama from one's family of origin" (p. 138). Thus, attachment schema shape how individuals view interactions with their coworkers and supervisors as well as influence perception of organizational culture.

Based on different underlying working models of the self and others built from relationships with their parents, people construct different attachment schema. Ideally, children's secure attachment to their parents provides safety and support that helps them deal with perceived danger and disruptive emotions. Unfortunately, some children experience insecure relationships with their caregivers. Bowlby (1982) delineated a model of four prototypical attachment schemas and associated relational strategies based on two forms of insecurity: *anxiety* over abandonment and *avoidance* of intimacy. These twin coordinates intersect to delineate attachment schemas that align well with the underlying conceptual coordinates of agency and communion.

The four distinct attachment schemas in the template are described as secure-autonomous, anxious-ambivalent, dismissive-avoidant, and fearful-disorganized. Low anxiety coupled with low avoidance characterizes a *secure-autonomous* attachment schema from which individuals view themselves and others as positive. It leads to ease and comfort with both intimacy and autonomy. High anxiety coupled with low avoidance characterizes an *anxious-ambivalent* attachment schema from which individuals view themselves as negative and other people as positive It leads to a preoccupation with an intimacy marked by low autonomy. High avoidance coupled with low anxiety characterizes a *dismissive-avoidant* attachment schema from which individuals view themselves as positive and other people as negative. It leads to a counter-dependency that prizes autonomy and resists closeness and intimacy. High avoidance coupled with high anxiety characterizes a *fearful-disorganized* attachment schema from which negative views of both self and other people lead to disorientation and isolation. Individuals can be described, from an individual differences perspective, as operating primarily from one of the four attachment schemas; yet they may form different attachment relationships with

particular individuals. And of course not all individuals fit neatly into one quadrant because individuals can operate from a range of positions within a quadrant or across quadrants.

Dispositional Strategy

Following from their attachment schema, individuals form dispositional strategies for performing social roles, including the work role [*Proposition 5*]. They also develop reputations as other people recognize their performance strategies or usual way of relating to other people and cultural norms. CCT views the self as an actor in social contexts through Gough's (1987) template of personality dispositions, that is, an individual's general tendencies in social behavior. Gough's template of possibilities aligns well with the underlying conceptual coordinates of agency and communion (e.g., Trapnell & Paulhus, 2011). Gough's (1987) framework of personality dispositions uses two dimensions of higher-order personality structure to broadly classify individuals' as displaying one of four dispositions. In Gough's cuboid typology of personality, the two basic modes of functioning involve relating to other people and responding to normative regulation. Hogan (1983) -- who worked with Gough at the Institute for Personality Assessment and Research at the University of California, Berkley -- used the terms sociability and conformity to denote these two basic dimensions in his socioanalytic theory of personality. Gough referred to the first vector as an interpersonal orientation toward relationships with other people (cf., agency). Its two poles are an extroverted external focus on action versus an introverted internal focus on inner life. Gough referred to the second vector as an orientation to social adjustment (cf., communion). Its two poles are norm-favoring acceptance of social rules versus norm-questioning doubt about social rules. Using these two dimensions of higher-order personality structure, individuals may be broadly classified into one of four types, with each type displaying distinct dispositional characteristics (Domino & Domino, 2006; Gough, 1987, 1990).

Gough referred to an extroverted, norm-accepting disposition as an Alpha orientation to relationships and rules. Individuals who display this tendency combine an extroverted orientation to other people and action with a norm-accepting orientation toward social standards and conventional values. Individuals with an Alpha disposition and lifestyle may see themselves as ambitious, active, productive, and socially poised. Other people tend to see them as dominant, enterprising, confident, talkative, intrepid, and encouraging. On the

job, Alphas at their best may be leaders; at their worst they may be opportunistic and manipulative.

Gough referred to an introverted, norm-accepting disposition as a Beta orientation to relationships and rules. Individuals who display this tendency combine an introverted orientation to other people and interpersonal experience with a norm-accepting orientation toward social standards and conventional values. They resemble Alphas in respecting rules yet are more reserved and less active. Individuals with a Beta disposition typically nurture other people, and often put the needs of others before their own. Being so good at delaying gratification, they often live without adventure. They may see themselves as ethical, methodical, conscientious, dependable, modest, persevering, and responsible. Other people may see them as careful, reserved, inhibited, conforming, and submissive. On the job, Betas at their best may be conscientious and ethical; at their worst they may be rigidly conformist and live in denial of their own needs.

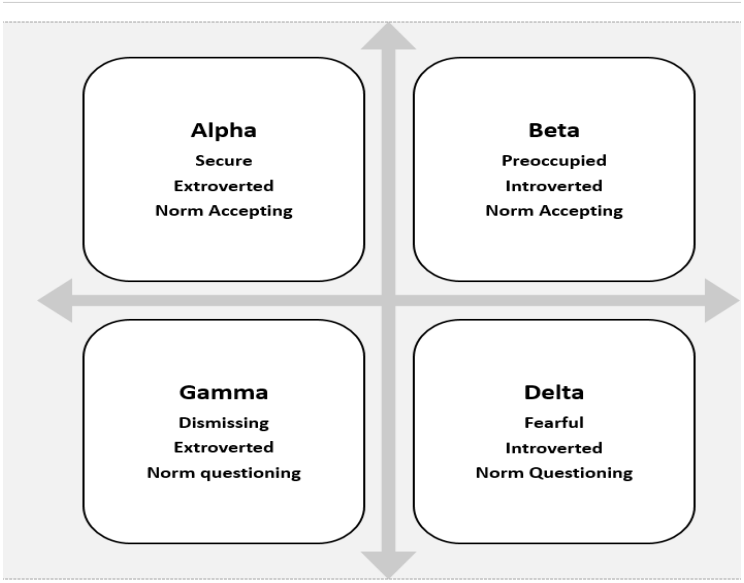
Gough referred to an extroverted, norm-questioning disposition as a Gamma orientation to relationships and rules. Individuals who display this tendency combine an extroverted orientation to other people and action while questioning rules, social norms, and conventional values. They may see themselves as innovative, forthright, versatile, and clever. Other people may see them as adventurous, impulsive, headstrong, non-conforming and quick to perceive flaws and absurdities in aspects of everyday life. On the job, Gammas at their best may be seen as creative in producing new ideas, products, or services; at their worst they may be seen as intolerant, disruptive, rebellious, and self-indulgent.

Gough referred to an introverted, norm-questioning disposition as a Delta orientation to relationships and rules. Individuals who display this tendency combine an introverted orientation to other people and action while questioning rules, social norms, and conventional values. They perceive things differently than other people, yet keep their thoughts and lack of personal meaning private. They may see themselves as shy, quiet, withdrawn, unnoticed, detached, and preoccupied. Other people may see them as timid, self-defeating, and passive. On the job, Deltas at their best may be imaginative and creative; at their worst they may be haunted by inner conflicts, alienated from other people, and prone to decompensation.

CCT views dispositional strategies as flowing from the fountainhead of attachment schemas: Alphas from the wellspring of secure-

autonomous attachment schema, Betas from anxious-ambivalent attachment schemas, Gammas from dismissing-avoidant attachment schemas, and Deltas from a fearful-disorganized attachment schemas. Attachment schemas and dispositional strategies condition how individuals seek to meet their basic emotional, social, and career needs [*Proposition* 6]. Figure 4 depicts CCT's template of social actors, with each type constituted by pairing an attachment schema with a dispositional strategy, both of which link to the meta-theoretical conceptual matrix of agency and communion.

Figure 4. Patterns of Attachment Schemas and Personality Strategies



Role Models

As part of self-construction during early childhood, individuals begin to look to cultural discourses to identify role models who display characteristics and behaviors that could use to solve their own problems in growing up and for fulfilling their psychological needs [*Proposition* 7]. Individuals then model their self-construction and ways to regard themselves on these admired characteristics and behaviors. Identification as a core process of self-construction occurs when an individual imitates behaviors and incorporates characteristics of the

models as a rather permanent part of the self [*Proposition* 8]. Choice of role models is the first career choice because imitating a model in fantasy and play, in due course, mobilizes interests and activities that through repetition and rehearsal develop vocational skills and preferences [*Proposition* 9]. In contrast to the parental authority of guiding lines, role models represent the wish to become and face the future. Guiding lines are *taken in as introjected influences* whereas role models are *taken on as incorporated identifications*. Whereas individuals introject guiding lines as a whole, they incorporate identity fragments from their various role models. Then beginning during late adolescence, individuals use self-conceiving processes to integrate these intact influences and partial identifications into a unified and cohesive psychosocial identity. Each individual leaves early childhood with an attachment schema for viewing interpersonal relationships, a dispositional strategy for performing social roles, and role models who display how to address unresolved issues and preoccupations [*Proposition* 10].

Social actors form core personal characteristics and interpersonal styles by refining their attachment schemas, repeatedly rehearsing dispositional strategies with parents and siblings, and imitating role models. In research and practice, counselors may understand an individual as a social actor by inquiring about guiding lines and role models. An individual's guiding lines suggest the working model in their attachment schema. To learn about guiding lines, practitioners might ask individuals to report three words that best describe their mother and three more for their father. Individuals' role models suggest personal characteristics that they have taken on. To inquire about self-construction as a social actor, the simplest procedure is to ask individuals to identify three role models from early in life and then describe the personal characteristics of each exemplar. The descriptors may be organized by locating them on the dimensions of sociability and conformity (Hogan, 1983) or interpersonal orientation and social adjustment (Gough, 1987) as illustrated in Figure 4.

The Self-Regulating Motivated Agent

Premise B: Late in childhood, individuals begin to function more often as motivated agents who direct their own lives toward congruent positions in society through self-regulation, that is, the processes by which individuals adapt their perceptions, feelings, and actions in the pursuit of a goal.

The self as a social actor answers questions such as "What is my character?" and "How should I conduct myself?" During middle childhood, the self as motivated agent faces new questions such as: "What is my relation to the world?" and "What shall I do next?" The self-as-agent becomes responsible for positioning the self-as-social actor around the neighborhood, at school, and in society. The self-regulating agent's pursuit of goals, values, and interests in these contexts can be understood as efforts by a social actor to move purposefully from a present position to envisioned future positions [*Proposition* 11].

To move toward a currently desired position the agent must intentionally select and seek desired effects through a course of purposeful action (Tiedeman & Field, 1961). In assessing the suitability of possible positions, CCT concentrates on the three motivational constructs of needs, interests, and values [*Proposition* 12]. *Needs* consist of what individuals lack and believe they require to feel secure. Needs propel behavior, driving a person toward certain satisfactions. *Values* are desirable goals and objectives, residing in the environment, that satisfy needs. *Interests* denote a complex adaptive effort to use one's environment to satisfy needs and fulfill values (Savickas, 2014a). While values represent objectives, interests concern the objects and activities through which objectives are attained (Super & Bohn, 1970). The symbolic representation of an interest is usually signified by the stimulus that evokes attention and action (e.g., "I like books").

With regard to forming and pursuing goals, the self-as-agent adopts a persistent, self-regulation schema that focuses motivation and shapes adaptation strategies [*Proposition* 13]. CCT views how the self-as- agent sets goals, make plans, and performs purposeful action again through the conceptual coordinates of agency and communion, this time as manifest in the two mid-range models of regulatory focus (Higgins, 1997) and career adaptation (Savickas, 2005).

Motivation Focus Schema

Motivational focus schema represent inclinations for attaining desired outcomes. Children learn to get along in the world by self-regulating their feelings and actions based on reward contingencies in the social regulation provided by parents (Higgins, 1998), especially in response to a child's needs for nurturance and security [*Proposition* 14]. Social regulation that emphasizes nurturance fosters in children a self-regulation schema focused on educational-vocational goals that promote accomplishment by aiming for achievement, reward, and advancement. In contrast, social regulation that emphasizes security

fosters in children a self-regulation schema focused on educational-vocational goals that prevent problems by maintaining responsibility, security, and safety. The two foci differ because a promotion schema plays to win whereas a prevention schema plays not to lose. In simple terms, a promotion focus directs behavior toward what one wants to do and personal growth whereas a prevention focus directs behavior toward what one ought to do and away from failure and psychological harm. Because promotion and prevention foci constitute independent dimensions (Higgins, 1997; Johnson & Chang, 2008), a person's self-regulation schema may display high levels in one focus, both foci, or neither focus.

Of course, healthy parents foster in their children a self-regulation schema that balances promotion and prevention among their vocational goals; other parents foster in their children either a promotion or a prevention schema; and troubled parents raise children who have difficulty with self-regulation. Individuals with a secure-autonomous attachment schema and an Alpha disposition tend to combine high levels of focus on both promotion and prevention; individuals with an anxious-ambivalent attachment schema and Beta disposition tend to combine a low level of promotion focus with a high level of prevention focus; individuals with an dismissive-avoidant attachment schema and Gamma disposition tend to combine a high level of promotion focus with a low level of prevention focus; and individuals with a fearful-disorganized attachment schema and Delta disposition tend to show low levels of focus on both promotion and prevention resulting in amotivation and difficulty in self-regulation.

Career Adaptation Strategies

Self-regulation schemas, whether focused on promotion or prevention, direct how people adapt to the vocational developmental tasks, occupational transitions, and work troubles involved in choosing and pursuing their career goals [Proposition 15]. *Developmental tasks* denote a life-long series of social expectations about preparing for and participating in jobs. A concept often invoked when considering developmental tasks is *vocational maturity*, linguistically defined as an individual's degree of vocational development and operationally defined by comparing the developmental tasks being encountered to those expected based on chronological age [*Proposition 16*]. *Occupational transitions* are changes in jobs, employers, or occupational fields. *Work troubles* include difficulty, disturbance, or discord on the job and can escalate into *work traumas* when employment is destabilized by socioeconomic or personal events such as illness and injury, plant

closings and company layoffs, or job redesign and automation. When individuals encounter one of these types of career changes, they must adapt. A need to adapt activates self-regulation, that is, the capacity to alter one's responses so as to change oneself or something in the situation to implement a plan or reach a goal [*Proposition 17*]. CCT includes a sequential model of self-regulated adaptation. The sequence highlights the personality characteristics of adaptive readiness, the psychosocial capabilities of adaptability resources, the behaviors of adapting responses, and the outcomes of adaptation results [*Proposition 18*].

Adaptive readiness. The self-regulation sequence of career adaptation begins with adaptive readiness that denotes a willingness and readiness to change when encountering the challenges of developmental tasks, occupational transitions, or work troubles. Adaptive readiness serves as a filter through which motivated agents interpret the environment. It denotes the inclination to activate self-regulation processes and initiate action when previously learned attitudes and activities cannot readily address career change, challenge, nor uncertainty. These disruptive conditions usually induce tension, anxiety, and diffused behavior until a new solution emerges. As a global construct, career adaptivity involves a compound mixture of multiple specific personality characteristics and motivations, including proactivity, conscientiousness, and openness. Given adaptive readiness, to function effectively a person must also possess the resources necessary for producing the desired consequences or avoiding undesired consequences.

Adaptability resources. Prompted by adaptive readiness, self-regulation resources come into play during times of transition. CCT defines these *adaptability resources* as psychosocial capacities for solving unfamiliar, complex, and ill-defined problems presented by disruptive conditions. As a meta-competence, c*areer adaptability* includes four transactional capacities that help to assess goal trajectories in changing environments: concern, control, curiosity, and confidence. *Concern* denotes the extent to which an individual is oriented toward the future and inclined to anticipate and prepare for career moves. *Control* denotes the extent to which an individual assumes responsibility for building a career. *Curiosity* denotes the extent to which an individual tends to imagine possible selves, explore opportunities, and gather information. *Confidence* denotes the extent to which an individual has faith in her or his ability to implement plans and solve problems in reaching occupational goals. Career confidence supports the persistent pursuit of aspirations and the anticipation of success despite obstacles. Using these four psychosocial resources, an

adaptable individual is conceptualized as (a) becoming concerned about the vocational future, (b) taking control of shaping one's vocational future, (c) displaying curiosity by exploring possible selves and future scenarios, and (d) maintaining the confidence to pursue one's aspirations.

The configuration and strength of adaptability resources developed by individuals shape their responses to career changes and challenges. For example, with well-developed resources of concern and curiosity but not control and confidence, individuals mainly just *look ahead* to prepare for projects chosen by others. In comparison, individuals with well-developed control and confidence but not concern and curiosity mainly begin to *look around* only when the time comes for a change. They have been heard to say, "I'm not going to worry about choosing an occupation until I am out of school" or "I'll think about it when I retire." Individuals with limited adaptability resources live in the present. With regard to the future, they neither look ahead nor look around, just look out to protect themselves.

Adapting responses. With or without adaptability resources, at some point individuals make transitions using *adapting responses* that, at their best, are shaped by the adaptability resources of concern, control, curiosity, and confidence as well as strong self-efficacy beliefs about their ability to execute the responses. The actual adapting responses themselves are specific behaviors that play a part in a general category of large actions meant to bridge transitions. For example, visiting an occupational information website is a small action that contributes to the larger action called exploring. In CCT, the four important adapting actions are anticipating, exploring, deciding, and problem solving. Individuals may adapt more effectively by *anticipating* or looking ahead to a new transition, *exploring* or looking around for new options and opportunities, *deciding* after looking at preferred options, and looking into and *solving* problems confronted in making a stable commitment to a new project for a certain time period. Performing specific behaviors that carry out the large actions of anticipating, exploring, deciding, and solving usually results in adaptation to changing circumstances and displeasing disruptions.

Adaptation results. Career adaptation results denote the outcomes of adapting responses, achieving at best a new equilibrium or fit between the individual and the environment. The Career Construction model of adaptation evaluates adapting results as either integrative, adjustive, or maladaptive (Shaffer, 1936; Haan, 1977). *Integrative coping*, which is oriented to reality, both solves a problem and reduces tension and

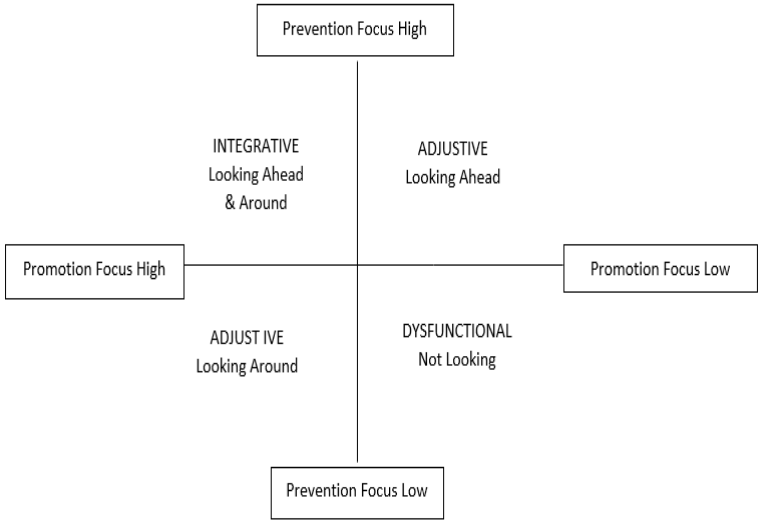
anxiety, moving the individual to greater stability at a higher level of organization, possibly involving a transformative development. Sometimes individuals cannot fully respond to a baffling problem so instead they adjust by reducing negative emotions. *Adjustive defending*, which distorts reality, does not solve a problem but does reduce tension and anxiety. Very often adjustive responses persist because anxiety reduction reinforces them. Although negative emotions are temporarily dispelled, anxiety and tension eventually return because the problem itself was not resolved. Nevertheless, adjustive defending may produce small, incremental change. Adjustive responses are often shaped by concern and curiosity or by control and confidence but not by all four adaptability resources. The third category of responses is neither integrative nor adjustive. *Maladaptive fragmenting* neither solves a problem nor reduces tension and anxiety because it is guided by idiosyncratic thoughts and feelings that do not correspond to reality nor change the existing state of affairs. Chronic use of maladaptive responses may produce repeated mistakes, personal difficulties, social withdrawal, or unregulated emotional reactions such as fearfulness and demoralization.

As an example of adaptation results, consider possible outcomes of deciding responses. Integrative coping may result in the outcome of decidedness, adjustive defending may result in undecidedness, and maladaptive fragmenting may result in indecisiveness. As a second example, consider possible adaptation results from exploring. Integrative coping may result in strategic information about long-term goals and tactical means gathered from both internal and external sources. Adjustive defending may result in tactical information about smaller steps and shorter time-frames gathered mostly from internal sources with a few external sources being used. Maladaptive fragmenting may result in a lack of basic information and unrealistic opinions.

Figure 5 depicts CCT's template of motivated agents, with each type constituted by pairing a motivational schema with an adaptation strategy, both of which have emerged from the meta-theoretical matrix of agency and communion. In Figure 5, the quadrant labeled "Integrative" represents a balance of promotion wants and prevention oughts combined with well-developed concern about the future, control to delay gratification, curiosity about options, and confidence in implementing plans. When faced with career decisions, individuals with this pattern of motivation look ahead and look around to make fitting educational and vocational choices. The quadrant labeled "Dysfunctional" represents amotivation with limited adaptability

resources. Individuals who display amotivation live in the present, with little sense of a future. When faced with career decisions, they just look out not to get hurt, rather than look ahead and look around for possible options. The quadrant labeled "Adjustive looking ahead" represents a prevention focus with the adaptability resources of concern and curiosity concentrated on in-depth exploration of a choice imposed by others, without looking around to identify a self-chosen alternative. The quadrant labeled "Adjustive looking around" represents a promotion focus with minimal looking ahead to the future. Individuals with this pattern of motivation wait for problems to arise and then look around for solutions. The conceptual pairing of concern with curiosity for looking ahead and control with confidence for looking around emerged empirically from person-centered research and score profiles on the *Career Adapt-Abilities Scale* (Savickas & Porfeli, 2012), not from a pre-existing theoretical rationale.

Figure 5. Patterns of Motivational Schemas and Adaptation Strategies



Work Roles

As agents directing their own lives through motivational schemas and adaptation strategies, individuals implement their self-concepts by constructing activity preferences or selecting work roles in which to pursue their career goals [*Proposition* 19]. Work-role preferences develop through the interaction of inherited aptitudes, physical make-up, opportunities to observe and play various roles, and evaluations of the extent to which the results of role playing meet with the approval of peers and supervisors [*Proposition* 20]. Role selection and entry involves a synthesis or a compromise between individual and social factors. It evolves from role playing and learning from feedback, whether the role is played in fantasy, in a counseling interview, or in real-life activities such as hobbies, classes, clubs, part-time work, and entry-level jobs. The initial sites of social niché construction are hobbies and academic majors. For most people, an occupation eventually becomes a primary social niché and strategy for economic survival. Occupations provide a core role, although for some individuals this focus is peripheral, incidental, or even nonexistent. Then other life roles such as student, parent, homemaker, leisurite, and citizen may be at the core (Super, 1990) [*Proposition* 21].

Personal preferences for arranging these life roles and opportunities to enter occupations are deeply grounded in the social practices that engage individuals and locate them in unequal social positions. An individual's range of opportunities and possible choices can be constrained by hard-to-escape social biases and ideological systems. These boundaries and distortions may both precede and exceed an individual. Thus, an individual's capacity to choose freely is not complete; each person must deal with the unchosen conditions of her or his life. Some people push against constraints to achieve for themselves, and maybe others, the best possible choice and most vital life design. Other people may "grin and bear it" as they patiently wait for things to change in their favor. And still other people, may dramatically change the conditions of their lives by moving to a different context, whether it be a different city, state, or even country.

Because social actors differ in vocational characteristics and social opportunities, they enter different occupational environments, which Holland (1997) described as RIASEC environments [*Proposition* 22]. Each occupation requires a different pattern of vocational characteristics, with tolerances wide enough to allow a considerable variety of individuals in each occupation. People are qualified for a variety of occupations based on the match of their vocational abilities and

interests to occupational requirements and rewards [*Proposition* 23]. Role selection and entry involves a synthesis or compromise between individual and social factors [*Proposition* 24]. Typically, *occupational success* depends on the extent to which an individual's abilities and actions meet the requirements of work roles [*Proposition* 25]. *Job satisfaction* depends on establishment in an occupation, a work situation, and a way of life in which one can play the type of roles that growth and exploratory experiences have led one to consider suitable for meeting needs, fulfilling values, and expressing interests [*Proposition* 26]. An individual's *career pattern* -- that is, the occupational level attained and the sequence, frequency, and duration of jobs -- is usually determined by the parents' socioeconomic level and the person's education, abilities, personality, self-concepts, and career adaptability in transaction with the opportunities presented by society [*Proposition* 27]. An objective career pattern is recorded in a resumé whereas a subjective career is a story that individuals tell about their work lives. The career story is composed by the self-conceiving autobiographical author.

The Self-Conceiving Autobiographical Author

Premise C: Social actors who pursue agentic goal may deliberate as an autobiographical author to conceive a vocational identity and compose a career story that imposes coherence and continuity on their actions over time.

While children can perform self-conceiving processes, the self-organizing and self-regulating processes take the lead during childhood and early adolescence. During late adolescence and emerging adulthood, self-conceiving comes to the fore to author a career story and authorize a vocational identity. To do so, the subjective "I" deliberates on the objective "Me" to author a career story about the self as a social actor and motivated agent [*Proposition* 28]. By arranging role model identifications and synthesizing experiences into a unified narrative, individuals compose a career story about their working lives, one that selectively appropriates and reconstructs past experiences into a story of the "Me" with coherence among self-definitions, consistency across situations, and continuity over time. With the self-conceiving process of composing a career story, individuals declare a *vocational identity* that presents an argument justifying occupational choices by relating their private inner world to the public outer world [*Proposition* 29].

Career stories revolve around vocational identity as individuals explain how they developed, the way they currently conduct themselves as social actors, and where they have positioned themselves in society as motivated agents. A career story enables its author to engage in autobiographical reasoning to clarify beliefs and values, evaluate social positions, formulate goals and projects, and commit to relationships and roles that position the individual in society. This *career positioning*, whether in aspiration or actuality, places a vocational identity in a particular occupation, that is, self-in-a-work-role [*Proposition 30*]. CCT views the self-conceiving autobiographical author through the meta-theoretical conceptual matrix of agency and communion, this time as manifest in reflexive schemas and vocational identity strategies.

Reflexive Schemas

When developmental tasks, occupational transitions, or work troubles obstruct routines and habitual behaviors, self-conceiving autobiographical authors deliberate about their career stories by thinking about who they are in relation to what they care about most and who they want to become in their social contexts. By way of the interchange between subjective personal dispositions and objective social positions, individuals analyze their conduct, shape life strategies, and guide action (Archer, 2012). CCT uses the term *biographicity* to denote the use of reflexive schemas to conceive vocational identities and compose career narratives in a "two-stage process" (Stedmon & Dallos, 2009, p. 5) of retrospective reflection and prospective reflexivity [*Proposition 31*].

Reflection involves a recognition of past experiences whereas reflexivity involves an active conceptualization of the future. Reflection focuses attention on memories, experiences, and cognitions to bring the past into the present and heighten self-awareness. In comparison, reflexivity ponders over reflections and extends the present into the future. Thus, reflexivity is a second-order cognitive process, defined as an internal dialogue in which individuals use knowledge from first-order reflections to determine and design future projects. As explained by the German philosopher Odo Marquard (2001, p. 66), "the future needs the past." So too does the output of reflectivity need the input of prior reflection. In sum, the internal dialogues constituting biographicity enable individuals to (a) understand the self in relation to social contexts, (b) recognize patterns in autobiographical narratives, (c) determine and plan projects in light of objective social circumstances, and (d) guide action by conditioning responses to

particular social situations. CCT views biographicity as a means by which individuals mediate the effect of social systems and cultural structures on their personal agency and courses of action, specifically in regard to the occupations that they seek, keep, or quit [*Proposition* 32].

Autobiographical authors differ in their reflexive schemas for deliberating about life design and career construction [*Proposition* 33]. CCT proposes that individuals' attachment and motivational schemas play a central role in structuring individuals' reflexive deliberations about vocational situations and career dissonance or disruption. Based on biographical interviews concerning life experiences and work histories, Archer (2012) conceptualized an individual differences typology of reflexive schemas that distinguishes four modes. CCT applies these possible modes to understand how individuals compose vocational identities and author career narratives. Each mode coincides with a different pattern of family socialization and parental guidance regarding how to set goals and commit to projects. Healthier families afford their children better opportunities for eventually taking control of their own lives. Archer (2012) denoted the four schemas for reflexive deliberation as autonomous, communicative, meta-, and fractured.

Autonomous reflexivity (cf., high agency, high communion) involves self-contained internal dialogues that lead directly to action, without the need for validation by parents or other people. Archer (2012) used the term *independents* to describe individuals disposed to use autonomous reflexivity because they create their own paths following purposeful, self-contained, and instrumental deliberation. Individuals who routinely engage in autonomous reflexivity may display a secure attachment schema as they independently direct their own action without the need for validation by other individuals. They follow their parents' guiding lines only to the degree that parental dictates coincide with their own self-chosen paths. Independent individuals with autonomous reflexivity do not attempt to replicate their parents' projects nor their way of life. Instead, they set their own goals as "they think and act" (Archer, 2003, p. 7).

Communicative reflexivity (cf., low agency, high communion) involves internal dialogues that lead to action only after being completed and confirmed by parents or significant others. Archer (2012) used the term *identifiers* to describe individuals disposed to use communicative reflexivity because, without exploring alternatives, they commit to life projects chosen for them by their parents. Individuals who routinely engage in communicative reflexivity may display an anxious-ambivalent attachment schema. They seek to replicate the family's way

of life and reproduce the status quo. Guided by family tradition, they set clear priorities yet their projects rarely exceed the confines of their family context. As part of communicative reflexivity, they turn to significant others in their immediate environment to talk things through and answer their questions. Focused on consensus, "they think and talk" (Archer, 2003, p. 7).

Meta-reflexivity (cf., high agency, low communion) involves internal dialogues in which individuals routinely question their own thoughts and critique their parents' way of life. Individuals who routinely engage in meta-reflexivity often challenge and disengage from parental values, which intensifies personal stress and social disorientation. Archer named this mode of reflexivity as "meta" to denote the self-monitoring or thinking about how one thinks. She characterized individuals disposed to use meta-reflexivity as *disengaged* because they find fault with their parents' life choices and so design for themselves very different ways of living. The term disengaged suggests that these individuals may have been physically detached from their parents at a young age or have mentally disassociated themselves from their parents' way of life. Cut loose from parental guiding lines, they cast about for their place in society by searching socio-cultural systems of beliefs as well as experimenting with different lifestyles. Preoccupied with their selves and single-mindedly pursuing their own interests, they frequently consider their jobs and relationships sorely wanting. In response to unrewarding contexts and relationships, they keep searching for new jobs and lifestyles. Focused on values, "they think and think" (Archer, 2003, p. 7).

Fractured reflexivity (cf., low agency, low communion) Individuals who routinely engage in fractured reflexivity may feel rejected by parents and subsequently limit their own participation in interpersonal relationship and work roles. Archer (2012) used the term *rejecters* to describe individuals disposed to use fractured reflexivity because they renounce their family of origin. They distance themselves from their families believing that their parents caused their problems. Lacking parental modeling and guidance, they remain confused. Instead of designing their lives and guiding action, their internal deliberations intensify cognitive disorientation and cause emotional distress. They suffer intense anxiety as they just passively respond to circumstance beyond their control. Focused on daily survival, "they think and talk to themselves" (Archer, 2003, p .7).

Identity Strategies

Reflexive self-authorship produces identity, that is, a narrative about the self in a social role. Individuals have multiple identities, each one corresponding to a particular social role that they enact. For example, a vocational identity tells the story about an individual in a work role. Identity narratives unify an individual's experiences in a particular social role to build a coherent and credible framework for creating meaning and dealing with dislocation, disruption, or discord. An identity narrative heightens self-awareness of a role and provides a consistent orientation toward its performance. In CCT, vocational identity organizes a psychosocial strategy for performing the work role. A vocational identity succeeds as a performance strategy to the degree that one is aware of it and other people validate it.

Viewing the distinct modes of reflexivity in terms of life strategies for dealing with career concerns leads directly to typologies of vocational identity formation and functioning. The four distinct reflexive schemas produce four different strategies for forming a vocational identity and for dealing with career concerns [*Proposition* 34]. CCT views vocational identity strategies and career narratives through the templates of possibility delineated by identity statuses (Marcia, 1980), identity functioning (Josselson, 1996), and identity styles (Berzonsky, 1989). The foundational work of Erik Erikson (1968) on psychosocial identity was re-conceptualized by Marcia (1980) as a typology of four identity statuses formed by the two axes of exploration and commitment. Marcia called the statuses achieved (cf., high agency, high communion), foreclosed (cf., low agency, high communion), moratorium (cf., high agency, low communion), and diffused (cf., low agency, low communion). Josselson (1996) renamed the four statuses to emphasize what individuals do rather than what they are. She called them Pathmakers, Guardians, Searchers, and Drifters. Berzonsky (1989) concentrated on the processes of identity formation rather than statuses. He explained that these four statuses result from three identity-shaping strategies by which people form, maintain, and revise their psychosocial identities: informational, normative, and avoidant.

Individuals *achieve* a vocational identity by making commitments to self-chosen goals after exploring alternatives. Securely attached individuals tend to use an *informational style* (Berzonsky, 1989) in which they actively gather and evaluate relevant information before committing to an occupational choice. This informational style of career construction typically includes planful attitudes toward the future, broad exploration of options, a rich fund of knowledge about

preferred alternatives, and well-developed decision-making competencies. With a healthy separation from parents, individuals integrate identifications with role models into a cohesive and stable identity and then make suitable and viable choices to implement that vocational identity in occupational roles. Once individuals with an informational style select educational and vocational goals, they usually settle into a course of action, work persistently toward their goals, and use problem-focused coping to meet the challenges they encounter along the way. Josselson (1996) referred to identity achievers as *Pathmakers* because these individuals travel a self-determined life trajectory.

Individuals living with *foreclosed* vocational identities commit to career goals chosen without a period of exploration that loosens ties to childhood certainties and convictions. Individuals with an anxious-ambivalent attachment schema tend to use a *normative style* (Berzonsky, 1989) in which they accept standards and prescriptions promulgated by significant others in making their choices. They often are highly anxious and engaged in a push-pull relationship with parents. Although they may struggle to differentiate themselves from caretakers, their ability to explore and report feelings of secure attachment is limited. This normative style for making occupational commitments springs from a preoccupation with meeting parental prescriptions and expectations in a way that preserve an existing identification as part of the family. Individuals who use a normative style often settle into a course of action without investigating occupational alternatives that may displease significant others. Rather than explore the self and situation in the process of forming commitments, they succumb to external pressures and protect themselves from external threats by adhering to the family's occupational specifications. The vocational identities that they form have coherence and continuity, but these features are produced by outside forces that shape and stabilize their commitments to circumscribed occupational preferences.

A normative style in and of itself is not problematic; it can lead to an interdependent identity defined by relationships with others rather than by individual attributes. Individuals who display interdependent identities have been described as society-minded (Kegan, 1994) and norm-favoring (Gough, 1990). Josselson (1996) referred to them as *Guardians* because they prioritize connection to others and preserve what was. Problems arise when individuals adopt a normative style in responding to powerful others who forcefully constrain occupational options. Excessive family pressure to follow a preordained career path

may cause an individual to inhibit exploration and forgo performance of choice behaviors, thereby delaying or impairing the individual's own adaptive efforts. Thus, the distinguishing feature that makes a normative style produce identity foreclosure appears to be the quality of relationships with parents. A normative style combined with healthy family relations may reflect an interdependent pattern of career construction, one in which an individual freely chooses the collective good of the family as the criterion for career choice. In contrast, a normative style combined with an inability to resolve relationship problems with parents typically leads to dependent decision making, foreclosed vocational identity, and constrained career construction.

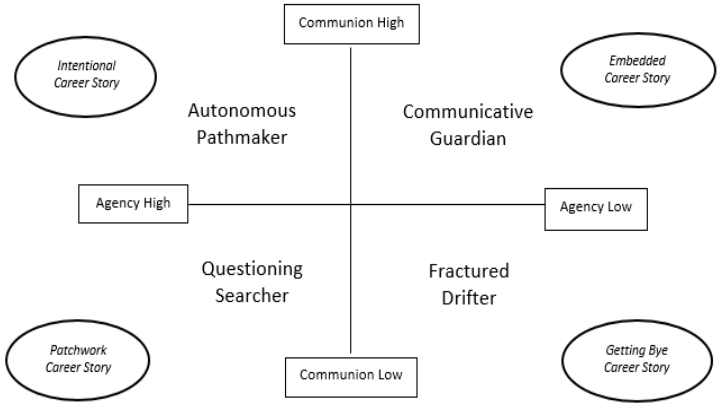
Individuals living in *moratorium* avoid commitments and demand freedom to keep exploring. Individuals with a dismissive-avoidant attachment schema tend to use an *avoidant style* (Berzonsky, 1989) by which circumstances and situations dictate their choices. In an effort to ignore problems and choices for as long as possible, they adopt an avoidant style involving delay, procrastination, and indecision. Individuals who use the avoidant style prefer emotionally-focused coping and generally lack role models. When the situation does not make the choice for them, they resort to emotionally-focused coping. The avoidant style springs from negative perceptions of parents. Josselson (1996) referred to individuals who live in a moratorium as *Searchers* because that is what they are doing.

Individuals with *diffused* identities neither explore nor commit to any identity-defining vocational values or roles. With a fearful-disorganized attachment schema, individuals do little to process self-environment organization and may stay aschematic with regard to identity functioning. They remain unreflexive and show little capacity for self-definition and commitment to values, goals, or relationships. With no set ideological commitments nor occupational direction, their work histories are generally unstable, disjointed, and externally controlled. Berzonsky (1989) did not assign them an identity style, maybe because they do not engage in an identity-forming process. Being disoriented and disorganized, they may experience a painful sense of incoherence as well as feel a chronic sense of emptiness. According to Kernberg (1978), they may display superficiality, weak ego-strength, poor impulse control, and little tolerance for anxiety. Josselson (1996) referred to individuals with diffused identities as *Drifters* to emphasize that what they are doing is just getting bye as they take things as they come.

The reflexive schemas delineated by Archer (2013) have been linked to identity strategies in an analysis of career stories by Domecka and Mrozowicki (2013) who characterized four career patterns with distinct pairs of schemas and strategies. They reported that using an autonomous reflexive schema tends to shape an identity strategy of *integrating* to *build* a career; a communicative reflexive schema tends to shape an identity strategy of *embedding* to *anchor* a career; a meta-reflexive schema tends to shape an identity strategy of *constructing* to form a *patchwork* career; and finally, a fragmented reflexive schema tends to shape an identity strategy of *getting bye* in a *dead-end* job.

Figure 6 depicts CCT's template of autobiographical authors' career narratives, with each quadrant constituted by pairing a reflexive schema with a strategy for vocational identity formation and functioning, both of which have emerged from the meta-theoretical foundational matrix of agency and communion.

Figure 6. Patterns of Reflexive Modes and Identity Functioning in Career Story Genres



Authoring a Career Story

During late adolescence, individuals begin to make sense of their work lives by conceiving a vocational identity and composing a career story with an occupational plot and career theme [*Proposition* 35]. In its simplest form, a career story places the series of occupational positions held

along a timeline [*Proposition* 36]. In this succinct form, the storyline as a sequence of what happened from start to finish may be recorded as a resumé. More elaborate career stories add an occupational plot to the storyline to form a meaningful whole that connects the positions and events by explaining cause and effect [*Proposition* 37]. In addition to an occupational plot that explains what happened, individuals may interpret why things happened by investing the explicit plot with meaning from an implicit life theme (Csikszentmihalyi & Beattie, 1979). A life theme refers to self-representations of needs, feelings, motives, and extended goal structures that a person is at first neither entirely aware nor able to fully communicate.

Thematic patterning of the occupational plot fully realizes a career story by adding a dominant motif or controlling idea meant to interpret why things happened, specify the means for meeting needs, highlight recurrent patterns of vocational behavior, and script future scenes [*Proposition* 38]. Considering the occupational plot in light of a theme typically identifies and interprets predictable patterns of events and experiences that seem to reoccur across the occupational plot, thereby increasing continuity and coherence in the occupational plot. Cumulating incidents and insights into an abstract theme also thickens the plot and amplifies larger meanings that may clarify choices to be made in advancing the story.

Researchers and practitioners interrogate stories for their themes using various approaches to literary criticism, including the mythic (Jungian), psychoanalytic (Freudian), structural (systemic), post-structural (deconstruction), Marxist (economic), and feminist (cultural). Each of these analytic structures for understanding stories and identifying themes contains preconceived expectations and principles of organization. CCT's structure for organizing an individual's biographical stories and recognizing career themes is called the *narrative paradigm*. "Narrative" denotes a story, and "paradigm" denotes a pattern. Hence the term "narrative paradigm" refers to CCT's perspective from which to apprehend thematic patterns in a career story.

The general pattern articulated by the structure of the narrative paradigm involves moving from passive to active [*Proposition* 39]. CCT suggests that researchers and practitioners formulate career themes by tracing how an individual uses work to move from passive suffering to active mastery, propelled by what Freud (1920) called the repetition compulsion. Development occurs and patterns emerge as people arrange their career stories around thematic problems that preoccupy

them and solutions that occupy them. These themes typically originate in childhood and adolescence as unfinished situations, tensions, or conflicts that individuals endure and strive to master. The need to repeatedly master these issues and preoccupations at higher levels of stability influences career choices, work roles, and interactions with supervisors and coworkers.

CCT conceptualizes a person's career themes as an individual instance of the narrative paradigm. As an abstract principle, "turning passive suffering into active mastery" represents a latent motive within people-in-general, one that is always present in individual careers yet only visible when manifest in adapting to changing circumstances such as vocational development tasks, occupational transitions, and work troubles. Facing these novel situations, the drive for mastery readily emerges and may direct how to adapt to the role changes that prompt its manifestation by turning tension into intention and preoccupation into occupation. Each novel career situation provides yet another opportunity for individuals to address recurrent issues and tensions by using the work role to advance the story toward more completeness and greater wholeness. Individuals' career themes become more explicit through their repetition as experiences accumulate during adulthood.

Tracing current motives in contemporary contexts back to antecedent tensions and unfulfilled needs during childhood and adolescence usually reveals a life theme or through-line that provides the continuity and coherence required for vocational identity formation and functioning. Expounding a narrative theme for a career story preserves the past in the present by grounding the here-and-now in the there-and-then as well as expresses a vocational identity by elucidating how a person remains identical with self despite diverse experiences. In this way themes in the present are retrospective; it is the mastery motive that can be prospective in extending and elaborating a theme. CCT does not attribute causality to themes, rather themes represent attempts to unify past experiences with coherence and continuity. In this regard, CCT asserts that contemporary career motives are functionally autonomous from archaic causes (Allport, 1937). This means that thematic continuity furthers historical analyses rather than propels historic functions. Practitioners and researchers must always remember that an individual's contemporary context is more significant in shaping current motives and their expression.

From an epistemology of logical positivism rather than social constructionism, Holland (1966) conceptualized a career theme as "a

complex cluster of personal attributes" (p. 10) resulting from resolving the multiple and inter-related experiences and influences of parents, school, friends, social class, community, hierarchy of prior choices, and chance (cf., Holland, 1966, p. 12). Holland's RIASEC model of vocational personality types states the essential theme of a career story in one word; for example, Realistic or Social. CCT proposes that each RIASEC theme can be elaborated with motifs that follow the narrative paradigm of actively mastering what has been passively suffered. For example, a fearful child may become a brave adult -- one need not be brave unless he or she has been frightened. Holland's RIASEC themes each encompass a set of mastery motifs (cf., McAdams, 2008), including for example from weakness to strength (Realistic), confused to knowlegable (Investigative), persecution to freedom (Artistic), helplessness to helpfulness (Social), poor to rich (Enterprising); and chaos to order (Conventional). McAdams (2008) identified an important set of "redemptive" motif patterns in biographies that may intertwine with each of the career themes: the recovery motif from sickness to health; the developmental motif from immaturity to maturity; and the religious motif from immoral to moral. While themes in a career story can be typed as reflecting a general pattern described by Holland (1997) or McAdams (2008), people construct unique, complex themes in their career narratives.

Although vocational identities become increasingly stable and career stories become more coherent from late adolescence forward, occupational plots and career themes do evolve and may change with time and experience as the situations in which people live and work alter [*Proposition* 40]. In responding to changes and challenges prompted by developmental tasks, occupational transitions, and work troubles, autobiographical authors re-conceptualize occupational plots and extend or amend career themes to redirect or revise their career stories in ways that reintegrate self, revitalize vocational identity, and rebuild work roles [*Proposition* 41]. An elaborated or revised story meant to direct transition to a new scene, episode, or chapter in a career is both *constructed by* the person and *constructive of* future behavior [*Proposition* 42]. Re-storied narratives empower individuals as motivated agents to make choices and adapt to changing career contexts and occupational situations [*Proposition* 43].

Fostering Career Construction by the Actor, Agent, and Author

As described in this chapter, CCT presents a set of principles that purport to explain and predict a number of interrelated phenomena concerning vocational behavior and career development. The theory is accompanied by a counseling discourse that concentrates on vocational behavior, occupational strivings, and career explanations relative to vocational development tasks, occupational transitions, and work troubles (Savickas, 2019b). I use the term "counseling discourse" instead of "counseling theory" to indicate a focus on practice-based knowledge and observable outcomes not measurement, prediction, and experimentation. As a disciplinary discourse, Career Construction Counseling (CCC) provides language and definitions for speaking and writing about career practices, paradigms for thinking about client issues, and methods for encouraging clients to resolve their concerns.

CCC differs from the two main interventions of the 20th century, namely vocational guidance (Parsons, 1909) that matches social actors to occupational groups whom they resemble and career education (Super, 1954) that teaches motivated agents ways to cope with developmental tasks and occupational transitions (Savickas, 2014b). In marked contrast to vocational guidance and career education, career construction dialogues focus on individual uniqueness to prompt autobiographical authors to reflexively transform career themes and extend their occupational plots by identifying fitting settings, possible scripts, and future scenarios [*Proposition* 44]. Thus, CCC aims to move clients beyond the reflection involved in guidance to a reflexivity that enables them to reconstruct their career stories and more intentionally use work roles to elaborate their life themes. CCC discourse proposes that vocational guidance and career education foster *retrospective reflection* that can lead to first-order change within one's current perspective ; whereas career construction dialogues foster *prospective reflexivity* that can lead to transformative second-order change from a new perspective (Fraser & Solovey, 2007) [*Proposition* 45]. A textbook (Savickas, 2019a) and practice manual (Savickas, 2019b) provide more information about the CCC model, methods, and materials.

Conclusion

Career Construction Theory presents a connected set of terms and statements that constitute a way of thinking and talking about careers in the 21st century. Appendix A lists the three premises and 45

propositions that constitute the theory. They systematize, in a formal and functional manner, knowledge about how individuals make themselves and build their careers in cultural and social contexts. In particular, the theory explains the interpretive and interpersonal processes through which individuals organize themselves, impose direction on their vocational behavior, and make meaning of their careers. As agents acting in and on the world, individuals manage their motives and position themselves as social actors in work roles that match their occupational characteristics and implement their vocational self-concepts. The derivative practice of Career Construction Counseling prompts clients to address vocational development tasks, occupational transitions, and work troubles by reflexively revising their career stories and repositioning themselves in new work roles.

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Appendix A

Career Construction Theory Premises and Propositions

The Self-Organizing Social Actor

Premise A: *With their families, individuals co-construct a psychological self as a social actor by organizing an attachment schema and dispositional strategy.*

Propositions

1. The opportunities to perform work roles that individuals perceive are co-constructed by social forces in the family and conditioned by societal institutions in the community as well as the momentum propelled by earlier choices and actions.

2. Beginning in infancy, individuals learn to perform as social actors in the family drama by introjecting parental influences and coordinating their emotions and intentions with their parents, who serve as *guiding lines* for moving in the social world.

3. By rehearsing their generally consistent attachment schema, individuals establish mental representations that organize a prime way of thinking about the social world as well as a script for interpersonal interaction in social roles and need fulfillment in work roles.

4. Throughout life, individuals use their attachment schemas as heuristic templates to guide interpersonal relationships, direct attention, interpret events, and generate expectations.

5. Following from their attachment schema, individuals form dispositional strategies for performing social roles, including the work role.

6. Together, attachment schemas and dispositional strategies condition how individuals seek to meet their basic emotional, social, and career needs.

7. As part of self-construction in early childhood, individuals select models who display characteristics and behaviors that would be useful in solving their own problems in growing up and for fulfilling their psychological needs

8. Identification as a core process of self-construction occurs as an individual imitates behaviors and incorporates personal characteristics of role models as a rather permanent part of the self.

9. Choice of role models is the first career choice because imitating a model in fantasy and play, in due course, mobilizes interests and activities that through repetition and rehearsal develop vocational skills and preferences.

10. Each individual leaves early childhood with an attachment schema for viewing interpersonal relationships, dispositional strategies for performing social roles, and role models that both cause and address unresolved issues and preoccupations.

The Self-Regulating Motivated Agent

Premise B: Late in childhood, individuals begin to function more often as motivated agents who direct their own lives toward congruent positions in society through self-regulation, that is, the processes by which individuals adapt their perceptions, feelings, and actions in the pursuit of a goal.

Propositions

11. The self-regulating agent's pursuit of goals around the neighborhood, in school, and at work can be understood as efforts by the social actor to move purposefully from a present position to envisioned future positions.

12. The key motivational constructs in assessing the suitability of possible positions are *needs* or why, *values* or what, and *interests* or how to realize values that satisfy needs.

13. With regard to forming and pursuing goals, the self as agent adopts a persistent, self-regulation schema that focuses motivation and shapes adaptation strategies.

14. Children learn to self-regulate their actions and feelings based on reward contingencies in the social regulation provided by parents, especially in response to a child's needs for nurturance and security.

15. Self-regulation schema, whether focused on promotion or prevention, direct how people adapt to the vocational developmental tasks, occupational transitions, and work troubles involved in choosing and pursuing their career goals.

16. Vocational maturity indicates an individual's degree of development relative to social expectations about preparing for and participating in jobs, operationally defined by comparing the developmental tasks being encountered to those expected based on chronological age.

17. A need to adapt to vocational developmental tasks, occupational transitions, and work troubles activates self-regulation, that is, the capacity to alter one's responses so as to change oneself or the situation in order to implement a plan or reach a goal.

18. Self-regulated career adaptation strategies sequence the personality characteristics of adaptive readiness, the psychosocial capabilities of adaptability resources, the behaviors of adapting responses, and the outcomes of adaptation results.

19. As agents directing their own lives through motivational schemas and adaptation strategies, individuals implement their self-concepts by constructing activity preferences and selecting work roles in which to pursue their career goals.

20. Work-role preferences develop through the interaction of inherited aptitudes, physical make-up, opportunities to observe and play various roles, and evaluations of the extent to which the results of role playing meet with the approval of peers and supervisors.

21. Occupations provide a core role and a way of life for most people, although for some individuals this focus is peripheral, incidental, or even nonexistent. Then other life roles such as student, parent, homemaker, leisurite, or citizen may be at the core (Super, 1990).

22. Because social actors differ in vocational characteristics and self-concepts, they enter different occupational environments, which Holland (1997) denoted as RIASEC environments. Each occupation requires a different pattern of vocational characteristics, with tolerances wide enough to allow a considerable variety of individuals in each occupation.

23. People are qualified for a variety of occupations based on the match of their vocational abilities and interests to occupational requirements and rewards. Personal preferences for life roles and occupations, however, are deeply grounded in the social practices that engage individuals and locate them in unequal social positions.

24. Role selection and entry involves a synthesis and compromise between individual and social factors.

25. Occupational success depends on the extent to which an individual's abilities and actions meet the requirements of work roles.

26. Job satisfaction depends on establishment in an occupation, a work situation, and a way of life in which one can play the type of roles that growth and exploratory experiences have led one to consider suitable for meeting needs, fulfilling values, and expressing interests.

27. An individual's career pattern -- that is, the occupational level attained and the sequence, frequency, and duration of jobs -- is determined by the parents' socioeconomic level and the person's education, abilities, preferences, self-concepts, and career adaptability in transaction with the opportunities presented by society.

The Self-Conceiving Autobiographical Author

Premise C: Social actors who pursue agentic goals may deliberate as an autobiographical author to conceive a vocational identity and compose a career story that imposes coherence and continuity on their actions over time.

Propositions

28. During late adolescence and emerging adulthood, the subjective "I" deliberates on the objective "Me" to author a career story about the self as a social actor and motivated agent.

29. In the self-conceiving process of composing a career story, individuals form a *vocational identity* that declares an argument justifying occupational choices by relating their private inner world to the public outer world.

30. Career positioning, whether in aspiration or actuality, locates a vocational identity in a particular occupation, that is, self-in-a-work-role.

31. Autobiographical reasoning concentrated on the interchange between subjective personal dispositions and objective social positions enables individuals to deliberate about life strategies and career plans in a two-stage process of retrospective reflection and prospective reflexivity referred to as biographicity.

32. Biographicity is a means by which individuals may mediate the effect of societal systems and cultural structures on personal agency and courses of action, specifically in regard to interpersonal relations and the occupations that they seek, keep, or quit.

33. Autobiographical authors differ in their reflexive schemas for deliberating about life design and career construction.

34. Four distinct reflexive schemas produce four different strategies for forming a vocational identity and dealing with career concerns.

35. Beginning late in adolescence, individuals make sense of their work lives by conceiving a vocational identity and composing a career story with an occupational plot and career theme.

36. A career story may be as simple as a resumé reporting a timeline of positions occupied.

37. More elaborate career stories add an occupational plot to the storyline to form a meaningful whole by connecting the positions and events in terms of cause and effect.

38. Thematic patterning of the occupational plot fully realizes a career story by adding a dominant motif to explain why things happened, specify the means for meeting needs, highlight recurrent patterns of vocational behavior, and script future scenes.

39. A person's career themes may by recognized as an individual instance of the *narrative paradigm*, that is, a general pattern of moving from passive to active.

40. Although vocational identities become increasingly stable and career stories become more coherent from late adolescence forward, occupational plots and career themes do evolve and may change with time and experience as the situations in which people live and work alter.

41. In responding to changes prompted by developmental tasks, occupational transitions, and work troubles, autobiographical authors re-conceptualize occupational plots and extend or amend career themes to redirect or revise their career stories in ways that reintegrate self, revitalize vocational identity, and rebuild work roles.

42. An elaborated or revised story meant to direct transition to a new scene, episode, or chapter in a career is both *constructed by* the person and *constructive of* future behavior.

43. Re-storied narratives empower individuals as motivated agents to make choices and adapt to changing career contexts and occupational situations.

44. In marked contrast to vocational guidance and career education, career construction dialogues focus on individual uniqueness to prompt autobiographical authors to reflexively transform career themes and extend their occupational plots by identifying fitting settings, possible scripts, and future scenarios.

45. Career construction counseling discourse proposes that vocational guidance and career education foster retrospective *reflection* that can lead to small first-order change within one's current perspective; whereas career constructing dialogues foster prospective *reflexivity* that can lead to transformative second-order change from a new perspective.

APPENDIX B

Glossary of Key Terms

AUTOBIOGRAPHY Life history that assigns present meaning to past experiences.

BIOGRAPHICITY Self-referential process by which individuals organize and integrate new and sometimes puzzling experiences into their autobiographies.

CAREER CONSTRUCTION Career counseling intervention that uses autobiographical narratives to script the next episode in a career. Compare to *career education* and *vocational guidance*.

CAREER EDUCATION Career counseling intervention that uses educational methods to teach students and coach employees on how to cope with imminent tasks of vocational development. Compare to *career counseling* and *vocational guidance*.

CHRONICLE Sequence of events arranged by time that merely terminates, without narrative closure. Compare to *plot*.

COUNSELING Dialogue between an individual and professional helper to empower that individual to function more effectively and achieve goals.

IDENTIFICATION Form of internalization in which characteristics of role models are taken on and incorporated as part of personality. Compare to *influences*.

IDENTITY A story that an individual tells about one's self in some social role or context.

INFLUENCES Form of internalization in which parental guides are taken in whole and introjected into personality. Compare to *identification*.

INTEREST Psychosocial tensional state between an individual's needs and social opportunities to attain goals that satisfy those needs.

LIFE PORTRAIT Macro-narrative that organizes a client's perspective, self-concepts, preferred settings, new script, and advice to self into a portrayal of the occupational plot, career theme, and character arc.

MACRO-NARRATIVE Integration of several small stories into a large story that consolidates self-understanding, goals, and performance in social roles.

MICRO-NARRATIVE Small story about an important incident, significant figure, self-defining moment, or life-changing experience.

NARRATIVE IDENTITY An autobiography that provides life with meaning and purpose.

PLOT Explanations and ending that structure a sequence of events into a coherent whole with a beginning, middle, and end. The end or conclusion brings the narrative closure lacking in a chronicle.

REFLECTION Thinking about the past and focusing serious consideration on memories, experiences and cognitions. It is retrospective and brings the past into the present. Compare to *reflexivity*.

REFLEXIVITY A second-order cognitive process of strong evaluation, that is, self-conscious evaluation of conscious knowing to determine alternate ways of acting in the future. It is prospective and connects the present to the future by reflecting on reflections. Compare to *reflection*.

STORY Organization of events into a sequence.

THEME Pattern woven by a recurring, central idea that provides the primary unit of meaning used to understand the facts of a plot.

VOCATIONAL GUIDANCE Career counseling intervention that uses inventories and information to match individuals with fitting positions. Compare to *career education* and *career construction*.