A Framework for Linking Career Theory and Practice

Mark L. Savickas

Northeastern Ohio Universities College of Medicine

Rootstown, Ohio 44272-0095

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In everyday life, the world presents itself to individuals as problems to be solved. This statement is doubly true in the consulting room where a counselor faces the problem of how to best address a client's problem. In working as problem-solving consultants, counselors encounter daily the professional problem of deciding which theory and intervention to use with which clients. For example, when clients seek help in choosing a major, the counselor may address that concern by using the trait-and-factor model and its associated methods and materials. In this instance, the model may sufficiently address the problem. However, all too often, a client's problem does not align with available career theories as well as it does in this example. A counselor's favorite theory may be silent about some problems or only partially address them.

Career theories do not comprehensively address all the problems which clients' present because career theorists designed their models to be partial, or to use Super's (1969, p. 8-9) word "segmental." Career theorists specify which problems they seek to address and then construct a theory to comprehend those problems. For example, Super (1990) used developmental theory and longitudinal methods to study intrapersonal differences in career decision-making processes at two or more points in time whereas Holland (1985) used person-environment fit theory and cross-sectional methods to study interpersonal differences in personality traits between two or more individuals. Neither Super nor Holland ignored the time or trait dimensions in vocational behavior, rather they each emphasized one over the other.

Theorists not only devise their conceptual models to address circumscribed problems, they also select a particular epistemology and a disciplinary stance that shapes what they can know about those problems. Consequently, even when

theories address the same problem, theories are not univocal. Because theorists view the problem from different standpoints, they see distinct aspects of the problem and thus prescribe interventions targeted for the aspect which their viewpoint accentuates. Thus, problems in making a career choice can be conceptualized from the perspective of career maturity, career decision making, and vocational identity. Each of these perspectives on the choice problem stems from different epistemologies and disciplines. For example, viewing choice problems as immaturity follows from a developmental psychology perspective and leads to educational interventions that foster more adaptive attitudes and competencies for career choice. In contrast, viewing choice problems as decisionmaking difficulties follows from an adjustment psychology perspective and leads to interventions that reduce anxiety or conflict prompted by the choices under consideration. Viewing choice problems as identity issues follows from a personality psychology perspective and leads to psychosocial interventions that foster personal development. Of course, taking all three perspectives on the choice problem deepens the counselor's understanding of the client's situation and leads to more comprehensive and effective intervention.

Theorists' preferences for epistemic and disciplinary stances shape how they address the question of "What can we know about a problem?" Few counselors are concerned with this knowledge question. Instead, counselors concentrate on a different question, namely "What shall the client do about the problem?" The answer to the theorists' knowledge question rests in abstract principles and objective knowledge. The answer to the counselor's action question rests in subjective understanding of a unique client in a particular situation. Of course, whenever possible, counselors use objective knowledge and theory to conceptualize the client's subjective experience. However, all to often, theory only addresses

part of the client's complex problem. Thus to fully understand each client and what to do to assist that client, counselors must draw from their own experience and practical knowledge. Whereas theory can be partial, practice must be holistic. Clients who present career problems cannot isolate their career problems from their other life issues. This leads to the question addressed in the next section: How do counselors apply theories that are partial and simple (Gottfredson, in press) to clients who are whole and complex?

## Linking Career Theory and Practice

In general, the most salient issue at the center of the theory-practice nexus seems to focus on how counselors decide what to do. Particular questions that stem from this issue include: "Which theories do counselors use with whom?" and "How do counselors turn objective theory into subjective understanding?" "Which techniques work best with which clients?" "How can counselors communicate practice knowledge to theorists?"

I have tried to answer these questions by devising a framework that links career theories, client problems, and counseling interventions. Metaphorically, I view the framework as a toolbox which organizes the most common career problems and relevant career interventions in discrete compartments bounded by separate career theories.

### A Framework for Career Services

In simple terms, the framework for career services adapts Wagner's (1971)

Theory of Structural Analysis of Personality to the domain of vocational psychology. Wagner constructed Structural Analysis as a practical means to relate psychodynamic personality theory to the clinical use of intelligence tests, projective techniques, and personality inventories.

As shown in Figure 1, Wagner's Theory of Structural Analysis uses three basic constructs to map personality: facade self, introspective self, and drives. Developmentally, the facade self emerges first, in response to environmental stimuli, as a means of adapting to social demands. The facade self, simply stated, consists of behavioral tendencies and problem-solving skills. It reacts to the environment and maintains reality contact. The introspective self develops later when "the individual takes cognizance of his [or her] own functioning, achieves a sense of identity and formulates a subjective set of ideals, goals, and self-appraisals" (Wagner, 1971). The introspective self, simply stated, consists of self-concept and ideals. It provides for internal living and enlarges the sense of identity in the facade self. In the structural model, drives press on both the facade and introspective selves.

## Insert Figure 1 About Here

The facade and introspective units of Structural Analysis correspond to the objective and subjective perspectives. The facade is rational, analytic, and empirical. In contrast to the facade's logical functioning, the introspective self is psychological. It is the domain of complex purposes, consciousness, and agency. Counselors operationally define the facade with scores from objective measures such as interest inventories and understand the introspective self with stories from projective techniques or biographical narratives. Whereas the facade is logical and the introspective self is psychological, the environment is sociological. Individuals are always situated in some community. They act and feel relative to the situations in which they find themselves. The internal dialogues between the facade and introspective selves is a process dimension that

consists of intrapersonal "self-talk." The other process dimension model in Structural Analysis is the interpersonal reciprocal interaction between the facade self and the community.

The Structural Analysis model, translated into the language of the vocational realm, organizes the multiple perspectives from which the practitioner might view a career client and helps the counselor to assess where, in the welter of complex stimuli presented by the client, the most useful intervention might be aimed.

Figure 2 shows the simple translation of the schemata into the language of worklife. The environment is portrayed as life roles, and can be discussed in the language of Super's (1990) life-career rainbow model and construct of role salience. The facade is a vocational self which can be operationally defined by Holland's RIASEC (1985) adjustive orientations and behavioral repertoires.

Viewing traits as unitary adaptive mechanisms also locates them in the facade self. The introspective self can be understood using Hughes' (1958) construct of subjective career and linguistically explained and operationally defined with variables such as "Adler's "life-style" (Watkins, 1984), Cochran's (1991)

"narrative knowledge," Super's (1954) "career patterns," and Super's (1963)

"self-concept." Drives have been largely ignored in vocational theory with the notable exception of Bordin's (1990) important work and measures such as the Vocational Apperception Test (Ammons, Butler, & Herzog, 1950) and card sorts (Slaney, 1990).

Insert Figure 2 About Here

The process dimensions in the framework can be comprehended using Krumboltz's (1979) social learning theory. For example, the interaction between the vocational self and environment lends itself to stimulus-response language and to Bandura's (1978) ideas about reciprocal determinism. The self-reflective structure called career engages in self-observation generalizations and can be operationally defined with the <u>Career Maturity Inventory</u> (Crites, 1978), <u>Career Beliefs Inventory</u> (Krumboltz, 1988), and <u>Career Development Inventory</u> (Super, Thompson, Lindeman, Joordan, & Myers, 1981).

Content of the Framework: Problems and Interventions

Each segment of the framework can be delineated by the types of problem and interventions it houses. A review of career decision-making scales and career maturity inventories identifies distinct types of problems that can be located at different places in the framework. The framework portrayed in Figure 3 shows six types of career questions that clients ask. The illustration links a particular career intervention to each question. The six types of career services are occupational placement, vocational guidance, career counseling, career education, career therapy, and position coaching. The following six sections explain, for each segment in the framework, the explicit question, implicit problem, relevant theory, and pertinent intervention.

Insert	Figure	3	About	Here

Occupational Placement Addresses Problems in Starting a Career. "How do I get a job?" Clients ask this question when they know the occupation in which they want to work and seek help in securing a job in that occupation. This question and the

problems inherent in it are located in the Life Roles segment of the framework because they concern the world-of-work and behavior in it. Individuals who have made a choice and committed themselves to implementing it benefit from assistance in planning and achieving the chosen position. Placement interventions emphasize skill training and concentrate on helping clients to gather information, write resumés, network, search for opportunities, and prepare for interviews. Placement interventions may be directed to reduce job-search anxiety, increase assertiveness, counter mistaken beliefs, coax exploratory behavior, increase social skills, and refine self-presentation behavior. Placement need not deal only with occupations, it can concentrate on helping clients secure educational positions such as a seat in graduate, professional, or technical school. Relevant theoretical models and placement methods are described in Herr, Rayman, and Garis (1993), Shingleton and Fitzpatrick (1985), and Stevens (1973).

Vocational Guidance Addresses Problems in Making Career Choices. "What shall I choose?" Clients ask this question when they possess a clear vocational identity and want help in translating that identity into occupational alternatives. This question and the problems inherent in it are located in the Vocational Self segment of the framework because they concern the individual's coping repertoire. Individuals who can clearly articulate their vocational identity benefit from assistance in translating that identity into matching occupations. Starishevsky and Matlin's (1963) article about translating self-talk into occupation-talk captures the essence of the guidance as a translation service. Guidance interventions emphasize translation of self-concepts into congruent occupations and concentrate on helping clients identify and explore possible matches between the self-concept and jobs. Guidance assists clients to articulate their vocational identities by discussing interests and abilities. It also increases

the number of fitting options that the individual explores. Guidance interventions include administering and interpreting interest inventories and ability tests, providing educational and vocational information, prompting exploratory behavior, and identifying career fields for consideration. Relevant theoretical models and guidance methods are described by Holland (1985), Katz, (1993), and Lofquist and Dawis (1991).

Career Counseling Addresses Problems in Self-Conception. "Who am I?" Clients ask this question when they cannot yet articulate their self-concepts and want help in exploring who they are and what life goals they should pursue. This question and the problems inherent in it are located in the Career Self segment of the framework because they deal with self-awareness and values. Individuals who cannot yet recognize and label the themes in their lives benefit from assistance in reflecting on patterns in their life stories. Career counseling interventions emphasize self-exploration and concentrate on helping clients to clarify their values and examine existential issues. The interventions include self-exploration and values clarification techniques that concentrate on heightening self-awareness and increasing self-esteem. The interventions prompt clients to elaborate their self-concepts through introspection. Relevant theoretical models and counseling methods are described by Brown and Brooks (1991), Lent (in press), Savickas (1989), and Super (1954).

Career Education Addresses Problems in Developing a Career. "How do I shape my career?" Clients ask this question when they are disoriented and confused about their careers and want help in understanding and dealing with vocational developmental tasks. This question and the problems inherent in it are located in the arrows between the Career and Vocational Selves because they deal with career attitudes, beliefs, and competencies. Individuals who live in the moment without

regard to imposing their own will on the future benefit from assistance in learning how to shape their destinies. Educational interventions emphasize self-control and concentrate on helping clients to develop adaptive attitudes toward and competencies for designing and managing their own careers. Career education interventions strengthen agentic attitudes, self-efficacy beliefs, and decision-making competencies. The actual interventions rely on deliberate psychological education and developmental counseling techniques that orient individuals to developmental tasks and foster the attitudes and competencies that lead to task mastery. Relevant theoretical models and career education methods are described by Blocher (1974), Hoyt (1975), Ivey (1986), and Super (1974).

Career Therapy Addresses Personal Problems. "How can work help me grow as a person?" Clients ask this question when they experience significant problems in formulating an integrated and coherent self-concept and want help to overcome barriers and thwarting conditions that frustrate gratification of needs. This question and the problems inherent in it are located in the Drives segment of the framework because they deal with the need to feel more secure. Individuals who have been discouraged by their life experiences benefit from assistance in modifying their prototypical reactions to situations. Career therapy works best with clients whose excessive indecisiveness, anxiety, and conflicts thwart their efforts to form a coherent self-concept and adaptive life-style. Therapeutic interventions help clients to work through traumatic experiences, increase their sense of self-worth, and cope with problematic situations and significant others. Relevant theoretical models and career therapy methods are described by Blustein (1987), Blustein and Spengler (in press), Meara and Patton (1994), and Subich (1994).

Position Coaching Addresses Problems of Adaptation. "How can I do better?"

Clients ask this question when they encounter problems in meeting the demands of the educational or vocational position which they occupy. This question and its inherent problems are located in the arrows between the Vocational Self and Environmental Roles because they deal with adaptation to life roles. Individuals who want to increase their success in and satisfaction with their work roles benefit from assistance in strategizing how to get ahead and get along. Position coaching interventions emphasize adaptations that improve the fit between the self and position by helping clients deal with the organizational culture, position requirements, and coworkers. Coaching assists these individuals to clarify the problem, identify pertinent attitudes and behaviors that address the problem, and then rehearse and implement these new attitudes and behaviors. Relevant theoretical models and position coaching methods are described by Carden (1990), Dix and Savickas (in press), Hall (1987), Lofquist and Dawis (1969), and Savickas (1991).

### Application of the Framework

In performing an intake interview with a new client, I use the framework to systematically assess the client's career problem and consider what the client might do about it. Assessment differs from measurement. Career tests and inventories gather data with which to measure client traits that contribute to the presenting problem. The results of measurement locate the client on a normal distribution of people who vary on the trait being measured. In this manner, tests and inventories generally provide objective details about the problem. In contrast, assessment reveals the problem itself because assessment focuses on problem identification and problem solving. The point is that assessment of a problem should generally precede measurement of a problem. Before administering

career inventories and tests counselors should assess the problem about which they want to collect in-depth data, then administer the specific inventories and tests that measure that problem.

My assessment of a client's problem involves a short series of branching decisions. I start with the main branch of determining whether the client is ready for vocational guidance or not. Functionally, this branching decision forces me to concentrate on the individual's vocational identity. If clients can state their interests, abilities, values, and life goals, then they are ready to translate that vocational identity into occupational possibilities. If they have a diffused or confused sense of vocational identity, then I turn my attention to understanding why they cannot coherently articulate their life themes and central projects.

After the primary branching decision, a secondary branching decision is made. If the primary decision was to concentrate on the causes of a diffuse identity, then the counselor must assess whether identity formation is thwarted by problems in (a) self-conception and meaning-making, (b) delayed development of career coping attitudes and competencies, or (c) motivational distortions. In approaching this secondary branching decision, the counselor addresses issues of self-concept and values by asking clients to answer the "Who am I?" question and to tell stories about how their problem started. If their responses are appropriately coherent, consistent, and complex, the counselor concentrates attention on the maturity of attitudes and competencies for career choice and adaptation (i.e., the arrows between the career self and vocational self). If their responses are fragmented, disjointed, and simplistic, then the counselor explores the issue of anxiety and conflict (drives section of the model) to see if career therapy must deal with motivational distortions before proceeding to career

counseling about self-concept issues. If the motivation problem seems to require motivation management, then the counselor can deal with the indecisiveness, anxiety, and conflict by using career therapy techniques. However, if the motivation problem seems to require motivation modification, then psychotherapy may be indicated. Assessing the problem as career misconceptions, self-concept development, or motivational distortion, implicitly prescribes certain categories of intervention as noted herein. The counselor can use career education to change beliefs, career counseling to clarify self-concept, or career therapy to manage motivation.

If the primary branching decision was that the client possesses a clear and stable vocational identity, the issue now is one of person-environment fit. Accordingly, the secondary branching decision focuses on identifying the client's current problem in implementing the vocational identity in the social environment. In approaching this secondary branching decision, the counselor addresses issues of environmental demands and social situation by asking clients to answer the question of "How am I doing in my current position?" Client responses generally reveal whether they are encountering problems of educational/vocational choice, transition, or establishment. If their responses indicate that they want to stay in their current school or work position, then the counselor examines issues of how clients can do better (e.g., stabilize, consolidate, advance, maintain) in the position that they already occupy. If their responses indicate that they wish to change positions, then the counselor must determine whether they have chosen a new position. If they have not, then the counselor assesses what they can do to explore and choose a new position. If their responses indicate that they have already chosen a new position, then the counselor assesses what they will do to secure that position. Assessing the problem as choosing a new position, securing

a new position, or improving performance in the current position implicitly prescribes certain categories of intervention as noted herein. The counselor can use guidance to predict fit, placement techniques to secure fit, or coaching techniques to improve fit.

Having identified the problem, the counselor can begin to conceptualize it by selecting a theory that speaks directly to the client's problem. That theory will almost automatically indicate general intervention strategies that address the problem. To devise a specific treatment plan, at this point, the counselor can assign tests and inventories to gather measurement data about the specific problem to be addressed. Each theory uses particular inventories and tests to operationally define the problems it addresses. Gathering measurements and more information about the client's problem is typically quite useful in formulating a specific treatment plan. For example, if the problem seems to be one of career attitudes, beliefs, and competencies, then the counselor might measure the problem by assigning inventories such as the Career Development Inventory (Super, Thompson, Lindeman, Joordan, & Myers, 1981), the Career Maturity Inventory (Crites, 1978), and the Career Beliefs Inventory (Krumboltz, 1988). If the problem seems to be one of choosing a fitting position, then the counselor might measure dimensions of fit by assigning the Self-Directed Search (Holland, 1985) or the Strong Interest Inventory (Harmon, Hansen, Borgen, & Hammer, 1994). In short, each theory uses distinct measurement tools to clarify the problem. Thus, counselors are well advised to use measures constructed to operationally define the theory which they employ to conceptualize a client's problem.

## Applying Practice to Theory

The model for career services presented in this chapter eases the exchange between career theory and practice. The framework was designed to systematize and

enhance the interaction between theory and practice in the daily work of practitioners who assess and counsel diverse clients who present career concerns. It provides a single, unified schema that counselors can use to (a) assess client career concerns, (b) identify the career theory that best comprehends those concerns, (c) select inventories and tests designed to measure and clarify those concerns, and (d) apply intervention strategies devised to resolve those concerns.

Because the framework organizes various theoretical perspectives on assessment and intervention, the framework may be useful in addressing Williamson and Bordin's (1941, p. 8) question: "What counseling techniques (and conditions) will produce what types of results with what types of students?" Counselors could systematically address this question using the framework and then incorporate the resulting practice knowledge back into segments of the framework. The goal would be to use the framework to map career problems (Gottfredson, in press; Herr, in press) and then develop protocols for effective intervention with particular populations. This effort might coalesce into validated micropractices which coincide with major segments of the framework. In this manner, the framework for applying career theory to practice may be used to apply practice to theory.

Lucas (in press) speaks to this process of applying practice to theory when she suggests that counselors systematically collect case studies linked to major career theories and then use the cases to develop counseling models or minitheories that specify "treatment protocols for frequently encountered career problems in specific populations." To develop this practice knowledge, counselors and theorists might start with practice particulars, not theoretical abstractions. They could follow Lucas' suggestion to use case studies as units of knowledge production. Case studies allow career researchers to isolate change mechanisms specific to a precise technique in a particular dyad (Kirschner, Hoffman, & Hill,

1994). By examining a similar series of clinical cases, counselors and researchers could identify need-to-know concepts and basic science issues. These theoretical issues could be addressed, hopefully ignoring traditional theoretical and disciplinary boundaries, by formulating micropractice (theory-based strategies) protocols for particular populations. The resulting micropractice could then be placed in the appropriate segments of the framework. Such an approach would continue to use science as the cornerstone of theory and practice but it would start with issues generated from clinical cases, use multiple epistemic perspectives to examine the issues, and validate micropractices that resolve the issues for particular populations. Starting research with clinical cases would allow counselors to return to their roots in the philosophies of pragmatism and functionalism as well as use social constructionism to broaden their epistemic perspectives beyond the vantage point of logical positivism (Savickas, in press). For example, case study research from a constructivist perspective might use Cochran's (1990) "dramaturgical phenomenology" to identify and frame basic issues. Cochran has suggested that researchers and practitioners could construct a common narrative from the study of a group of individuals who have experienced a single career phenomenon such as indecision. The resulting narrative would certainly identify important issues and themes and possibly suggest micropractices that address them.

This clinical case approach to building a science of career intervention would also elaborate the meaning of existing career theories. Counselors create the meaning of a theory and its best beliefs when they use a theory with particular sets of clients. The use of a theory shows, or makes visible through application, the strengths and weaknesses of that theory. In particular, application of a theory reveals its oversights and flaws. In addressing these

omissions, as they must do when they assist clients with complex problems, counselors elaborate and improve the theory. What counselors do when they practice shapes what researchers can know because activity structures meaning.

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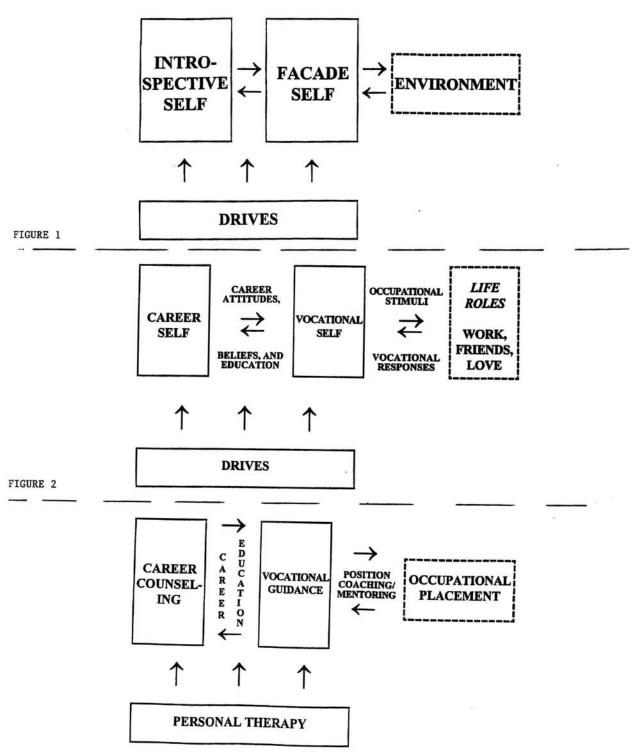


FIGURE 3

## INTROSPECTIVE SELF

**FANTASY LIFE** 

SELF-CONCEPT, IDEALS, & LIFE-STYLE

PRIVATE LOGIC

EVALUATES & CORRECTS FACADE SELF

HEAVILY DEPENDENT ON LANGUAGE

> CONSCIENCE, PERSEVERANCE, & MOTIVATION

SYNTHETIC, GENERAL

INTERNAL LIVING. COMPLEXITY, & DEPTH

ENLARGES SENSE OF IDENTITY

INTERACTS / SELF-PROGRAMMED

MATURITY

THOUGHT

# FACADE SELF

REALITY CONTACT

ATTITUDES & BEHAVIORAL TENDENCIES

CONSENSUAL VALIDATION

RESPONDS TO ENVIRONMENTAL DEMANDS

FORMED AT A PRE-VERBAL LEVEL

MAKES REALITY MEANINGFUL

ANALYTIC, SPECIFIC

BEHAVIOR

PROBLEM-SOLVING

REACTS / ENVIRONMENTALLY PROGRAMMED

**ADJUSTMENT** 

INTELLIGENCE

# INTROSPECTIVE SELF

LEARNING = DEVELOPMENT OF INSIGHT

CHANGE IN COGNITIVE

STRUCTURE

**EDUCATION:** EMPHASIZE EXPERIENCE

PREPARE TO THINK

MOTIVE: DISEQUILIBRIUM IN LIFE-SPACE

"HUMANISTIC"

GESTALT

**PURPOSIVE** 

# FACADE SELF

LEARNING = CONDITIONING

= REINFORCEMENT

TRAINING: EMPHASIZE BEHAVIOR

PREPARE TO PROBLEM SOLVE

MOTIVE: STIMULUS-RESPONSE

"BEHAVIORISTIC"

SOCIAL LEARNING

RESPONSIVE

N V I R 0 N M

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E N T

COGNITIVE BEHAVIOR MODIFICA-TION

(STRESS INNOCULATION)