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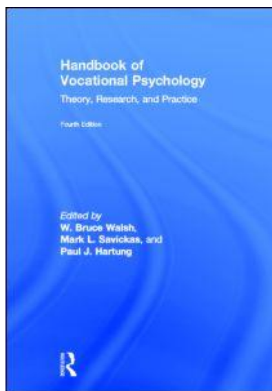

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W. Bruce Walsh, Mark L. Savickas, Paul J. Hartung

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Career as Story: Making the Narrative Turn

Paul J. Hartung

We have each of us, a life story, an inner narrative—whose continuity, whose sense, is *our lives.*
Oliver Sacks (1985, pp. 105–6)

There is no agony like bearing an untold story inside of you.
Maya Angelou

Every person's life is worth a novel.
Erving Polster (1987)

INTRODUCTION

Human life lives in story. Everyone has a story to tell and most of us want desperately to tell it. Story surrounds us as we tell our own stories, listen to those of other people, and construct them as "we *become* the autobiographical narratives by which we 'tell about' our lives" (Bruner, 1987, p. 14). As we grow and develop, so, too, do the stories we relate about ourselves grow in complexity (Fivush and Haden, 2003) such that by the time we reach adolescence and young adulthood we define ourselves increasingly by the stories we tell (McAdams, Josselson, and Lieblich, 2006). During these age periods emerges the ability and drive to think of our lives as integrative narratives of the self. Doing so prompts the process of constructing a narrative identity (Ricoeur, 1986) that represents "the stories people construct and tell about themselves to define who they are for themselves and for others" (McAdams et al., 2006, p. 4). Invoking our narrative identities, "when we want someone to know who we really are, we tell them our life story" (Polkinghorne, 1988, p. 29). Our narrative identities convey who we are with regard to roles we enact in various life domains that include work, family, play, community, and spirit. From time immemorial, story has offered us a way to fulfill our quest for meaning through our activities in these domains and bring understanding, coherence, and continuity to our lives and our situations.

Telling one's own story "is, by all accounts, ancient and universal. People anywhere can tell you some intelligible account of their lives. What varies is the cultural and linguistic perspective or narrative *form* in which it is formulated and expressed" (Bruner, 1987, p. 15). Underscoring the central role of narrative in all human life, literary theorist, critic, and semiotician Roland Barthes commented:

> The narratives of the world are numberless … narrative is present in myth, legend, fable, tale, novella, epic, history, tragedy, drama, comedy, mime, painting … stained glass windows, cinema, comics, news item, conversation. All classes, all human groups, have their narratives … narrative is international, transhistorical, transcultural: it is simply there, like life itself. (Barthes, 1977, p. 79)

A human universal, narrative has now taken hold across the human sciences. We find its grip evidenced in a distinct turn to narrative principles and practices, a particular movement in the careers field from focusing on occupations to emphasizing life design, and the incipient yet rapidly growing interpolation of narrative into career theory and intervention. These elements frame narrative's own story in the careers field.

TURNING TO NARRATIVE

Recognizing the vast power and prevalence of story in human life, the careers field—like its parent disciplines of psychology (e.g., Bruner, 1986; McAdams et al., 2006; Polkinghorne, 1988; Sarbin, 1986b) and counseling (e.g. Hayes, 1994; Krippner, Bova, and Gray, 2007; White and Epston, 1990)—increasingly *turns* toward the language of narrative and storytelling in its paradigms and practices (e.g., Amundson, 2003; Cochran, 1997; Maree, 2007; Richardson, 1993, 2012; Savickas, 2011a,b; Savickas, Nota, Rossier et al., 2009; Whiston and Rahardja, 2005; Young and Collin, 2004). In so doing, the careers field joins a host of disciplines ranging from education, medicine, and law to the fine arts, politics, and the natural sciences in making *the narrative turn* (e.g., see Bruner, 1991; Gergen, 1990; Krieswrirth, 2000; Punday, 2002), a turn said to have been launched in the social sciences (Hyvärinen, 2006) by Mitchell's (1981) volume *On Narrative*. In that volume the narrative turn emerges as a phenomenon involving the study and use of narrative as a way humans represent and structure the world. Drawing from Hayden White, the narrative turn evinces a view on narrative that might be characterized thus:

> … far from being one code among many that a culture may utilize for endowing experience with meaning, narrative is a metacode, a human universal on the basis of which transcultural messages about the nature of a shared reality can be transmitted. (White, 1981, p. 2)

Migrating to narrative as a metacode suggests embracing it as a transformative paradigm for intellectual inquiry and practical advancement of human phenomena and lived experience. The move recognizes narrative as an appealing and legitimate way of knowing; a way that historically precedes and complements science.

FROM OCCUPATIONS TO LIFE DESIGN

For the careers field, encompassing the disciplines of vocational psychology and career development, the narrative turn involves a fundamental change in direction that follows a temporal path through its history. On this path, the careers field finds itself now moving into a new, third wave of theory and intervention. The first wave concerned matching people to jobs in a *psychology of occupations* initiated in the early 1900s (Holland, 1959; Parsons, 1909; Roe, 1956). The second wave concentrated on managing worker and other life roles over the life span in a *psychology of careers* launched at mid-twentieth century

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(Super, 1957, 1980). The present, third wave involves contemporary models and methods focused on making meaning through work in a *psychology of life designing* introduced at the end of the first decade of the twenty-first century (Savickas et al., 2009). Each one of these three movements, from occupations to careers to life design, builds on the next. Together, they reflect three larger epistemological moves from, respectively, *mechanism* and a focus on traits, to *organicism* and a focus on developmental stages, to *contextualism* and a focus on narratives (Sarbin, 1986a). McAdams and Pals (2006) eloquently captured these three perspectives in commenting that "If dispositional traits [individual differences] sketch the outline and characteristic adaptations [individual development] fill in the details of human individuality, then narrative identities [individual design] give individual lives their unique and culturally anchored meanings" (p. 210).

Making the narrative turn in the careers field signifies a major shift toward formulating career theories and delivering career interventions that better account for the dynamic, non-linear, contextualized, diverse, and uniquely patterned nature of human work life within a rearranged social structure of work itself (Savickas et al., 2009). For the careers field and for so many disciplines, this shift has been long in coming and long unavailable as an alternative because such fields have been governed by largely scientific or quasi-scientific modes of inquiry and discourse and by nonstoried forms of investigation and reportage. Narrative models were so far outside the disciplinary paradigms that they were literally inconceivable, at least as analytic tools. Story may have appeared in these contexts, but it would have been mobilized and thought of only as digression, example, or rhetorical argument, and not worth commenting on. But, as we know, things have changed; the wheel has turned (Kriesworth, 2000, p. 295).

NARRATIVE AND CAREERS

The ability of story to capture life's richness and complexity now draws careers scholars and practitioners increasingly to turn the wheel toward narrative theory and practices in order to comprehend vocational behavior and assist people to construct and design their lives through work and engagement in other life spheres such as family and community (Cochran, 1997; Maree, 2007; Savickas, 2011a; Savickas et al., 2009). Compelling forces of economic, occupational, and organizational instability along with personal insecurity about work and career attendant life in the digital age accelerate this turn. Today, we seem to find ourselves increasingly seeking security in the blankets of our own life stories rather than in those comforts previously offered by acting as a lasting character in a once-stable organization's story (Savickas, 2011a; Savickas et al., 2009; Sullivan, 2011). The capricious, unsteady, equivocal, and discontinuous nature of work and workplaces in contemporary life prompts an intensified search for meaning (Dik, Byrne, and Steger, in press). Meanwhile, the digital age presents the paradox of unparalleled interconnectivity alongside mounting isolation as the demands of making a living and living a life often stretch us beyond our families, communities, and other familiar contexts. In response, the careers field increasingly articulates perspectives and advocates counseling practices that emphasize links between work and relationships (e.g., Blustein, 2006, p. 88; Blustein, Schultheiss, and Flum, 2004; Flum, 2001; Richardson, 2004, 2012; Schultheiss, 2003).

With revolutionary times of the global and digital age as setting, narrative has emerged as a central character in the story of the careers field with growing vigor over the past 25

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years. Building in temporal sequence on its psychological foundations in individual differences, psychosocial development, and social cognitive deliberation (Hartung, 2010), the careers field has constructed a new base in narrative psychology and its concomitants, psychological constructivism and social constructionism. Psychological constructivism views the person as a scientist who uses personal cognitive structures to make meaning of experience (Kelly, 1955). Social constructionism views the person as a storyteller who uses narrative and relationships to co-construct meaning (Gergen, 1999). Whereas both psychological constructivism and social constructionism (cf. Collin and Guichard, 2011; Young and Collin, 2004) characterize human experience as incoherent and variable, narrative psychology asserts that we continually project "backwards and forwards in a manner that maintains a sense of coherence, unity, meaningfulness, and identity" (Crossley, 2000, p. 542). Narrative itself provides "the fundamental scheme for linking individual human actions and events into interrelated aspects of an understandable composite" (Polkinghorne, 1988, p. 13).

The narrative turn toward career as story recognizes people as holistic, self-organizing, and active constructors and shapers of their lives through work, family, play, and other elements of human experience. It remains an individual's story that "has the power to tie together past, present, and future in his or her life. It is story which is able to provide unity and purpose … The story is the answer to the questions, 'Who am I?' and 'How do I fit into an adult world?'" (McAdams, 2008, p. 18). Augmenting the prevailing views on careers in objective terms of traits indicated by test scores that suit occupations and in subjective terms of tasks to master in developing a career, the narrative perspective conceives of work as a vehicle we may use to advance our life projects (Savickas, 2011a).

A STORY OF NARRATIVE IN CAREER

Telling a story about the rise, role, and refinement of narrative in the careers field forms the purpose of the present chapter. Like any good story, making *this* a good story requires some key elements (Bruner, 2004). For our purposes, these elements include first a character who evinces growth *and* continuity, connection to allies, and a clear context in the surrounding world. With narrative as our central character, we will find this story rich in these desired elements. Narrative endures from the dawn of humanity and continues to spread in form and use throughout the human sciences. Meanwhile, contextualism, psychological constructivism, social constructionism, perspectivism, and various forms of relativism remain some of narrative's steadfast companions set within a host of contemporary human science disciplines in late postmodern times that draw upon these ways of knowing. Of course, for the present story, the careers field provides the primary setting.

Second, our story needs the key element of a plot that contains a patterned sequence of events and presents obstacles to goals. The temporal ebb and flow of main and marginal psychological and counseling epistemologies and practices offers us such a plot. Finally, any good story must have "a beginning, a middle, and an ending, [or at least] the sense of an ending" (Sarbin, 1986a, p. 3). Borrowing from McAdams (2008, p. 18), the story told herein, as one chapter of a larger story within the careers field, aims to tie together the past, present, and future of narrative in career theory and intervention. To accomplish these aims, the chapter sketches the character of narrative and traces its history in the careers field to its roots in the humanities and psychology as a human science. Attention then turns to narrative's

growing role in career theory and intervention. Our story closes with commentary about narrative in the careers field and prospects for a sequel to this telling of its story.

NARRATIVE: A CHARACTERIZATION AND BRIEF HISTORY

Recognizing that "story" and "history" both derive from the Greek *istoria,* meaning "inquiry" (Gare, 2007, p. 96), our story begins by tracing our character as a paradigm and practice to its historical roots in the humanities. From these roots, narrative grew and eventually assumed a minor role in psychology's early years. Therein its role faded rather quickly as narrative and relativism became displaced by empiricism, reductionism, and psychology's concern with becoming a science akin to its natural science compatriots. A resurgence occurred in the last two decades of the twentieth century as psychology, like its social science siblings, gave narrative a renewed small part that now grows in the second decade of the twenty-first century. Ironically, just as its role increases within psychology and the human sciences, some argue that narrative faces decline in the humanities, the very disciplines wherein it once flourished. It must now be buoyed by concerted defenses of it aimed at attacking social problems by critically investigating the narratives dominating people's lives, and showing how they can be empowered, how they can become authentic agents, by reflecting on the narratives they are living out, gaining access to new narrative forms and by participating in the creation of new narratives (Gare, 2007, p. 114).

Before tracing the history of narrative in the careers field from its bases in the humanities and psychology, let us first offer some characterization of our character, narrative.

CHARACTERIZING NARRATIVE

Derived from the French *narratif*, narrative means an account. More specifically, narrative denotes an accounting or recounting of a series of events, facts, places and so on, given in order and with the aim of establishing connections between them (*Oxford English Dictionary*). Narrative thus involves temporal and causal elements. From its Latin root, *narrare*, to narrate means to tell a story. These rather simple definitions belie the incredibly rich and complex ways in which theory characterizes narrative.

Offering a story of its conceptual history and travels from literature to a multitude of disciplines, Hyvärinen (2006) considered various meanings ascribed to and debated about narrative. Such meanings portray narrative within one of two predominant systems of narrative theory: *narratological* and *narrative turn*. The narratological system of theorizing, dating to Aristotle, characterizes narrative in a traditional sense—as representation of a causally related series of events. Historically, narratology involves the study of narrative within literary studies and extending to other humanistic disciplines and the social sciences (Hoshmand, 2005). Broadly speaking, the narratological perspective portrays narratives as recountings that depict and reflect life. In this way, narrative takes on a representational quality defined by its content, or what a story tells about. Narratology aligns most closely with psychological constructivism and the notion that meaning resides within the person. Social constructionist influences have prompted an alternate narratological view on story as not representing but rather creating a social reality and truth (Hoshmand, 2005).

In contrast to narratological approaches, the narrative-turn system of theorizing conceives of narrative as a metaphor useful for understanding human experience and behavior. A

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pioneer of narrative psychology, Theodore Sarbin (1986a) advanced this characterization in describing narrative as a root metaphor "for examining and interpreting human action" (p. 19). As such, narrative offers a way of understanding and making meaning in the world. Applied to psychology and the careers field, narrative offers an alternative metaphor to that of logical positivism. The mechanist or machine metaphor of the positivist view assumes that human behavior can be reduced to its component parts, studied using traditional scientific methods, and ultimately predicted and controlled. The narrative-turn perspective asserts that narratives not only represent life, and in this case human behavior including vocational behavior, but also shape it in terms of how we perceive and act in the world. From the narrative-turn perspective, human life is storied. To perhaps more clearly distinguish the two systems of narrative theory, in a narratological view stories are *told*, they have narrativity. In a narrative-turn view, stories are *lived*, such that we may speak of life and career as being a narrative. This latter view permeates the characterization of narrative advanced in psychology and the careers field whereby in making the narrative turn:

> Narratives became something to be lived out individually and collectively; became something attached to our very identities. These changes meant, of course, that narratives gained huge potential for integrating human lives, lending them more profound unity. In that way, also the vision of a healing, benevolent narrative was generated. [British philosopher Alasdair] McIntyre has one exceptionally poignant sentence to launch the positive appreciation of narrative: "Deprive children of stories and you leave them unscripted, anxious stutterers in their actions as in their words." (Hyvärinen, 2006, pp. 26–7)

Situated between the narratological view on narrative as stories told and the narrative-turn view on narrative as stories lived, Hyvärinen (2006) noted a third, sociolinguistic perspective. The sociolinguistic perspective on narrative dates to seminal work that concentrates on how stories are told (cf. Labov, 1997). In this view, narrative comprises six components: abstract (why the story is told), orientation (the story's who, what, when, and where), complicating action (disrupting event that initiates the plot), evaluation/reflection (interpretation or meaning of the plot), resolution (closure of the plot and return to stasis), and coda (end). This view emphasizes the role of the storyteller's personal past experiences in telling "natural narratives"—that is, narratives not manipulated in any premeditated way, such as those told in everyday conversations and interviews.

Mindful of these theoretical characterizations, narrative may be further understood psychologically as a cognitive form or way of thinking. As such, narrative represents one of two complementary types of cognition, the other type being paradigmatic cognition (Bruner, 1990). In paradigmatic or logico-scientific cognition, we assign meaning categorically in the form of the group or class to which some phenomenon or event belongs, such as "She is an engineer" and "She is a woman." Using empirical evidence and formal logic, paradigmatic cognition links cause and consequence to establish universal truths. Paradigmatic thinking involves scientific objectivity and reason that may be likened to a computer. By contrast, in a narrative mode of thought we construct meaning through telling stories to ourselves and to others. Narrative thinking involves subjectivity and sense-making by assembling events, actions, and so on into a temporally sequenced, coherent whole or story. Narratives hold individual, particularized truths for people because they offer realistic, sensible representations of human action and life. Causality in these two types of thinking differs as can be

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seen "in the logical proposition: 'if x then y', and in the narrative recite 'The king died, and then the queen died.' One leads to a search for universal truth conditions, the other for likely particular connections between two events—mortal grief, suicide, foul play" (Bruner, 1986, pp. 11–12).

Thus, "what is considered a vice in science—openness to competing interpretations—is a virtue in narrative" (Czarniawska, 2004, p. 7). Considering narrative in this way characterizes it as "a basic human strategy for coming to terms with time, process, and change … that contrasts with, but is in no way inferior to, 'scientific' modes of explanation that characterize phenomena as instances of general covering laws" (Herman, 2009, p. 2).

A BRIEF HISTORY OF NARRATIVE

Narrative serves as the main character in its own story. Rich and far-reaching, this story dates to the very beginning of humankind (Barthes, 1977). As a mode of intellectual inquiry and therapeutic practice, narrative's story began and has long lived in the humanities, reached the natural sciences in the early 1900s, and eventually travelled far and wide throughout the social sciences to psychology and the careers field in the last quarter of the twentieth century. Mindful of its history as traced herein, a comment made over 30 years ago continues to ring true today: "[the study and use of narrative] has become a positive source of insight for all the branches of human and natural science" (Mitchell, 1981, p. ix).

Narrative's humanistic roots

Recognizing that narrative pervades human life, disciplines ranging from literature, history, and philosophy to ethnography, theology, and film have long made it a focus of analysis and use. Hermeneutic studies of religious texts such as the Bible, Talmud, and Koran effectively mark the origins of literary narrative analysis (Czarniawska, 2004). In European philosophy, ascriptions of value to narrative as an analytic tool date to Aristotle. As its greatest champion, seventeenth-century philosopher Giambattista Vico opposed Descartes' mechanistic and naturalistic science view in favor of a perspective on knowledge as created in socio-historical context. Described as the founder of cultural science, Vico maintained that all knowledge results from human construction such that "it is only what we have made that we can truly know" (Gare, 2007, p. 99). This view frames the social constructionist perspective on reality as designed rather than discovered; a view advanced by a line of philosophers that runs from Immanuel Kant, John Dewey, and Georg Hegel to Martin Heidegger, William James, and Ludwig Wittgenstein (cf. Hayes, 1994). Vico's original view reached the natural sciences such that, by the end of the twentieth century, notions of interdependence, randomness, and relativism received increasing attention in the sciences and mathematics.

Histories of narrative in more contemporary times (e.g., Czarniawska, 2004; Laszlo, 2008; Polkinghorne, 1987) converge on its roots in twentieth-century literary theories of Russian formalism in the 1920s and 1930s, American new criticism in the 1940s and 1950s, French structuralism in the 1960s, and a refocused attention on German hermeneutics in the late 1960s and early 1970s. These theories each held their prime champions, all influencing the rise of narrative in the human sciences that gained a foothold by the end of the 1970s (Czarniawska, 2004). Ryan (2005) credits structuralists Roland Barthes and Claude Bremond with freeing narrative from primarily the purview of literary genres to "a semiotic

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phenomenon that transcends disciplines" (p. 344), thereby propelling the narrative turn that reached psychology in full by the 1980s. The work of philosopher Paul Ricouer (1986) on narrativity, identity, and time perhaps held greatest sway in the emergence of narrative psychology (cf. Polkinghorne, 2004) and likewise in the infusion of narrative in the careers field.

The rise, fall, and return of narrative in psychology

Narrative had a place in psychology's immediate pre-history and played a significant role in its early years through the life history, biographical, and case study work of figures such as Sigmund Freud, Henry Murray, Gordon Allport, and Charlotte Bühler (Polkinghorne, 1988). Explicit attention to narrative comes through in Freud's dream narratives, Jung's universal life myths, Adler's early recollections, and Murray's recurrent themes (McAdams, 2008). Kelly's (1955) work on personal construct theory effectively advanced narrative by emphasizing psychological constructivism and the role of internal models of reality or beliefs people form about themselves and the world. Narrative's role ebbed significantly, however, when "after 1950, [psychology] turned almost exclusively to working within the limits of a positivistic definition of formal science" (Polkinghorne, 1988, p. 101). The empiricist zeitgeist proved narrative's great obstacle to becoming a more central character in psychology's story for 30 years, despite some interest noted in the study of lives beginning in the mid-1960s and reviewed by Runyan (as cited in Polkinghorne, 1988).

By the mid-1980s, a group of scholars working independently began in earnest to resurrect the narrative paradigm in psychology. Widely influenced by hermeneutic phenomenology and its emphasis on how people interpret and make sense of events, experiences, and phenomena in the world, scholars seeking to move beyond predominant mechanistic and organistic views of the human mind and behavior returned to narrative. László (2008) credited Sarbin (1986b) with introducing the term "narrative psychology" in his seminal book wherein he advanced narrative as a root metaphor for psychology and a representative form of contextualism, whereby all knowledge depends on circumstance. Sarbin's edited volume laid a core foundation for narrative's reemergence and subsequent rise in psychology by the end of the twentieth century. A slightly earlier work by McAdams (1985) on personological interpretation of life narratives along with texts by Bruner (1986) on narrative as a mode of knowing and by Polkinghorne (1988) on narrative as a primary form of meaning-making solidified this foundation. Bruner's (1990) later book in which he advanced folk psychology as a historical tradition in everyday, commonsensical human acts of intentional meaning-making proved especially critical to the emergence of narrative in counseling and psychotherapy (Angus and McLeod, 2004; White, 2004).

Narrative streams in the careers field

Concurrent with its rise, fall, and reemergence in psychology, narrative evinces a similar path in the careers field. Logical positivism and empiricism clearly have dominated the field throughout its first 100 years. Meanwhile, notable progress in narrative career theory and practice has occurred with substantial and continuing gains made especially over the past 20 years.

While outlining the original matching model for vocational guidance, Parsons (1909) wrote in ways resonant with narrative and constructivist themes (Spokane and Glickman,

1994), evidenced partly in an educational booklet produced by the Vocation Bureau entitled "Suggestions for a Plan of Life." More directly, Super (1957) incorporated narrative in his theory of careers, drawing from Bühler's (1933) work on developmental tasks and stages identified in life histories. He advanced this work in the Career Pattern Study (Super, 1985) by collecting life history data to capture the rich context and storied nature of human life-careers. In developing the Thematic-Extrapolation Method, Super (1954) offered arguably the first narrative career intervention for ascertaining life themes to promote vocational choice and development. The Thematic-Extrapolation Method combined career pattern and life history data in a chronological sequence that permitted identifying and interpreting recurring themes in an individual life-career story (Jepsen, 1994). Ultimately, Super (1990) recognized the value of narrative and psychological constructivist approaches to both theory and practice. He did so by using Kelly's (1955) language of personal constructs to comprehend social and psychological dimensions of self-concept development. Kelly (1955) himself emphasized vocation as a prime vehicle through which we give meaning to our lives. His theorizing would widely influence an eventual sprouting of psychological constructivist and narrative career theory, research, and practice (see Brook, 1992; Bujold, 2004; Cochran, 1985, 1997; Neimeyer, 1989, 1992; Parr and Neimeyer, 1994; Savickas, 1997b; Young and Collin, 2004). Despite these few early developments, however, the predominance of Parsons' (1909) seminal work and differential, or person-environment fit psychology, effectively impeded narrative assuming a prominent role in the story of the careers field during its first 50 years. An effort by David Tiedeman in the early 1960s would attempt to change this situation.

Now considered intellectually ahead of his time, Tiedeman (1961) moved beyond his roots in traditional, positivist, trait-factor conceptions of career to advance a social constructionist process model of careers. Tiedeman found the models and methods of differential career psychology ineffective in capturing the rich complexity and subjective nature of human life-careers. He therefore devised an alternative approach; one that, consistent with the notion of career as story, he advanced in fact as more of a language, philosophy, and way of thinking about careers than a theory (Jepsen, 2008). Tiedeman's career paradigm incorporated concepts such as reflective career consciousness and career constructionism to explain career as an ongoing, unfolding, evolving process of growth and change.

Drawing from principles of engineering and physics, Tiedeman proposed that we seek to organize ourselves and our experiences into meaningful wholes. We purposefully act to anticipate, implement, differentiate, and reintegrate our experiences to define our own personal realities and bring continuity to our life-careers. In so doing we inscribe our careers with meaning. Tiedeman's pioneering, if not widely understood, accepted, or appreciated, work, beginning in the early 1960s, made him in retrospect "the first psychologist to systematically apply constructivist epistemology to the comprehension of careers" (Savickas, 2008, p. 217). Because he believed career embodied life, Tiedeman proposed that both satisfaction and success derive from engaging in work commensurate with one's own personal meaning system, much like shaping a narrative that allows one to become more complete and whole (cf. Maree, 2007).

Through his work, Tiedeman set the stage for an eventual rise of narrative and psychological constructivist approaches to career theory and intervention that occurred in full by the early 1990s. This rise would include Savickas' (1989, 1997b) use of memory narratives in career style assessment and counseling. Savickas' work, in time, reached full bloom as he moved from psychological constructivism to adopting social constructionism as a

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metatheory for and narrative as one of three conceptual levels in the theory and practice of career construction (Savickas, 2001, 2002, 2011a). Meanwhile, Neimeyer (1988, 1989, 1992) added to the early growth of narrative's role in careers by applying Kelly's (1955) repertory grid technique and personal construct theory to career assessment and counseling. Likewise, Bujold's (1990) consideration of biographical hermeneutic approaches to career, Jepsen's (1992) work on career as story, Collin and Young's (1992) advancement of constructing career narratives, Peavy's (1997) and Cochran's (1985, 1997) narrative career counseling approaches, along with Young, Valach, and Collin's (2002) consideration of narrative and hermeneutics in contextual career theory gave narrative a substantial foothold.

By the end of the first decade of the twenty-first century, these groundbreaking works and their subsequent elaborations both within the United States and throughout the international careers community (e.g., Brott, 2001; Bujold, 2004; Chen, 2002; Collin and Guichard, 2011; Gibson, 2004; Maree, 2007; McIlveen and Patton, 2007; Reid and West, 2011; Richardson, 2012; Savickas, 2011a, 2012) moved narrative closer to center stage in the careers field. Securing this move, life designing offered a new internationally conceived and developed paradigm (Savickas et al., 2009) that consolidated narrative and social constructionist streams in career theory and intervention. With its triadic focus on adaptability, narratability, and intentionality in the process of using work to construct a meaningful life, this new paradigm would augment the P-E fit, developmental, and social-cognitive traditions that dominated twentieth-century career theory and intervention. In so doing, it reflected the careers field's shift from a primary concern with vocational choice dating to the early 1900s and then with career development beginning in the 1950s to now self-construction dating to the 1990s (Collin and Guichard, 2011). Self-construction (Guichard, 2009; Savickas, 2011a), life construction (Duarte, 2009), narrative career counseling (Amundson, 2003; Cochran, 1997; Savickas, 2011a; Vilhjálmsdóttir and Tulinius, 2009), and career complexity (Craig, 2009) today offer exemplary life designing models and methods for comprehending the complexities of twenty-first-century life and careers. Life designing along with all of these early and later works to advance psychological constructivism, social constructionism, and narrative in careers would draw upon and trace their intellectual and practice roots to the work of prominent figures and movements in narrative's history in the humanities, human sciences (especially narrative psychology), and career studies.

NARRATIVE IN CAREER THEORY AND INTERVENTION

Narrative's emergence as a central and increasingly prominent character in contemporary career theory and intervention's story is due to the application of social constructionism as a metatheory for careers. Social constructionism asserts that meaning exists only through and within human experience and sense-making. Reality becomes what we make it to be individually (psychological constructivism) and collectively (social constructionism) rather than something directly knowable and discoverable. Meaning exists in our words, not in the world. Consistent with multiculturalism (Pedersen, 1991), multiple truths may be constructed and no singular truth exists. The work of advancing a psychological constructivist epistemological view on careers has yielded three distinct approaches to incorporating narrative in career theory and practice (Savickas, 1997b, 2001). These approaches include personal constructs, biographical hermeneutics, and the narrative paradigm described briefly herein. A commandingly comprehensive discussion of these three approaches appears in a chapter by Savickas (1997b).

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Personal constructs: career as meaning making

The personal construct approach to career derives explicitly from George Kelly's (1955) personal construct theory (PCT). Emphasizing human subjectivity and individuality, Kelly sought to understand and promote psychological functioning by attending to the unique linguistically-based constructs we use to organize and make sense of our experiences and the world. Personal constructs represent idiosyncratic hypotheses, ideas, or abstractions we form about ourselves, others, and our experiences. We use these constructs to anticipate and interpret the meaning of events, people, and a host of other phenomena. Adapting PCT to the vocational domain, work becomes a primary vehicle through which we anticipate, interpret, and shape life's meaning. In line with PCT, Collin and Young (1986) argued strongly for incorporating a constructivist epistemology in career theory and practice. Subsequently, they did so themselves in their contextualist explanation of career (Collin and Young, 1992; Young et al., 2002).

Various other theorists and practitioners have used elements of PCT to comprehend and foster the role and meaning of work in people's lives (e.g., Brook, 1992; Neimeyer, 1988, 1989, 1992). Principal among these individuals, Cochran (1985, 1997) outlined a systematic narrative assessment and counseling model and method that incorporates a personal construct approach. Framed by seven career counseling phases or episodes, Cochran's narrative approach aims to assist individuals to construct and enact more meaningful narratives of their lives. Initiating the narrative career counseling process, client and counselor elaborate the client's career problem by eliciting and discussing the client's personal construct system with regard to occupations using one or more of a variety of techniques such as vocational card sorts and laddering. This process yields the client's core meaning of work and career that may be further shaped throughout the counseling process.

Biographical hermeneutics: career as life theme

A second approach to incorporating narrative in career theory and practice traces to Super's (1957) work on life histories and career patterns. To capture the rich context and stories of a life-career, Super developed the Thematic-Extrapolation Method. This method elicits life themes that convey individual intentions and subjective views on self and situations. By focusing on life themes that shape individual meanings of career, Super added to the P-E fit focus on gaining self-knowledge of personal traits to promote making vocational choices. Following more than 30 years later, Young and Collin (1988) advanced Super's earlier work by directly applying hermeneutic methods to the study of careers. They subsequently embedded hermeneutic models and methods of interpreting autobiographical narratives into a contextualist theory of careers (Young et al., 2002). Their work launched the biographical hermeneutic approach that uses narrative methods to study and consider life themes that compose a career.

The narrative career assessment and counseling schemes of Cochran (1997) and Savickas (1989, 2011a) also reflect a biographical hermeneutic approach. Partly reflecting personal construct psychology, Cochran's (1992) notion of career project engages individuals to identify and work on a personal life theme by examining the central, common meaning of various career-related tasks. Similarly, micro-stories elicited in Savickas' (2011a) career construction counseling combine to shape a macro-story indicating the life theme. While

incorporating biographical hermeneutic principles, both Cochran's and Savickas' approaches may be best characterized as exemplars of the narrative paradigm approach to incorporating story in career theory and intervention.

The narrative paradigm: career as story

Combining both the personal construct and biographical hermeneutic approaches, the narrative paradigm conceives of career as a story (Cochran, 1997; Jepsen, 1992; Savickas, 2011a). The career as story metaphor incorporates all of the elements of a narrative. These elements include an author who tells and constructs the career story, a setting that provides the story's context, action in the form of a plot that aims to reach a career goal, and resources the author uses such as personal traits and social supports to achieve that goal. Because careers contain the same basic components of action and temporal organization found in story, they tell of a person's work life that she or he constructs in the present to explain the past and anticipate the future.

Narrative career assessment and counseling approaches offer models and methods for assisting individuals to author their own career stories (e.g., Cochran, 1997; Maree, 2007; Savickas, 2011a; Whiston and Rahardja, 2005). For example, moving from psychological constructivism to firm grounding in social constructionism, career construction counseling (Savickas, 2011a) assists clients to author and enact career stories that connect self-concepts to work roles, fit work into life, and achieve self-completion and make social contributions through work. It does so by melding differential, developmental, social cognitive deliberative, and life design counseling approaches to consider (a) the structure comprising the roles that compose a life; (b) the adaptive strategies clients use to deal with changes and navigate transitions over the life span; (c) the stories revealing the life theme that patterns, shapes, and defines the self-concept and its meshing with society; and (d) the settings in which the self may best interact with and adapt to the social and occupational world. Using the narrative paradigm, career construction counseling translates these four dimensions into practice by empowering clients to author their own life-career stories and enhance their experience of work as a personally meaningful context for self-construction and a socially relevant endeavor.

CONSTRUCTIONIST METATHEORY AND THE SHIFT TO MEANING

The careers field has steadily infused its theories and practices with the psychological constructivism of personal construct theory, biographical hermeneutics, and the narrative paradigm along with social constructionism since the 1980s (e.g., Cochran, 1985, 1997; Collin and Guichard, 2011; Collin and Young, 1986; McIlveen and Patton, 2007; Patton and McMahon, 2006; Peavy, 1997; Richardson, 1993, 2012; Savickas, 1989, 2011a, b; Whiston and Rahardja, 2005). This narrative infusion comes in direct response to assisting people to cope with fundamental changes attendant with life and work in the digital age. With organizational stability now a rarity, individuals must create the inner stability needed to carry themselves through multiple voluntary and involuntary work transitions that they will likely experience over the course of their lives. Such stability comes through self-reflecting on one's own story to shape a coherent narrative identity and discern work's personal meaning (Carlsen, 1988; McAdams, 1985). In so doing, a life-career becomes self-directed, self-managed, and

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self-constructed (Briscoe, Hall, and DeMuth, 2006; Savickas, 2011a; Sullivan, 2011). Against this backdrop, the predominant goal for career intervention shifts from matching people to occupations and developing careers in the twentieth-century age of industry and organizational stability to one of making meaning through work in the twenty-first-century age of information and tremendous flux. Reflected in the careers field's turn toward narrative, this new goal for career intervention now prompts the development of career counseling theories that apply and respond to calls for assisting people across a diverse sociocultural landscape to advance the role of work in their lives (Blustein, 2006). Career counseling theories aim to complement the many existing theories of career choice and development by articulating the principles, processes, and practices of career intervention.

THE NARRATIVE ADVANCE OF CAREER COUNSELING THEORY

Making the narrative turn in the careers field has emphasized constructing career *counseling* theories to complement career *development* theories (Savickas and Walsh, 1996). Career development theories aim to explain vocational behaviors such as career exploration, vocational choice, and work adjustment. By contrast, career counseling theories seek to describe schemes and specify practical interventions for fostering work in people's lives. Career development theories deal in logico-scientific principles to comprehend career. These theories have been used largely to inform career intervention models and methods of vocational guidance and career education that promote, respectively, objective vocational choice (e.g., Holland, 1997) and subjective career development (e.g., Super, 1990). Despite sustained efforts to apply career development theories to career intervention practice, the fact remains, as Osipow (1994) stated some years ago, that "Career theories are not counseling theories" (p. 222). Most career development theories, unlike counseling and psychotherapy theories, do not explicitly guide counseling practice. Much of the disconnect between career theory and counseling rests in imprecise definitions and inadequate models of career counseling. Over the years, some work has attempted to redress this problem. A review of this work over a decade ago indicated significant albeit modest progress with substantial work remaining toward developing career counseling theories to effectively guide practice (Subich and Simonson, 2001). An update of this review ten years later proved encouraging in its report of a substantial evolution of career counseling theory informed largely by narrative, psychological constructivism, and social constructionism (Subich, 2011).

Drawing in recent years upon constructionist principles and narrative practices has yielded models and methods that align more closely with counseling as a career intervention that promotes life design. Certainly, some career development theories have incorporated narrative to varying degrees in describing and explaining vocational behavior (most notably, Savickas, 2002; Young et al., 2002). Meanwhile, a collection of works has deliberately produced career intervention models that align with what Savickas (2011b) proposed as a new general model for career counseling steeped in social constructionism and narrative. This general model proposes that career counseling aims to "construct career through small stories, deconstruct and reconstruct the small stories into a large story, and co-construct the next episode in the story" (Savickas, 2011b, p. 256).

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CAREER INTERVENTION: GENERAL MODELS

To more fully comprehend narrative's role in career theory and practice according to this general model for career counseling, it helps to understand it in terms of three core career intervention models: vocational guidance, career education, and career counseling (Savickas, 2011b). Vocational guidance as a career intervention model seems best characterized as emphasizing individual differences and P-E fit approaches fit to match people to jobs (Holland, 1997; Lofquist and Dawis, 1991; Parsons, 1909). Career education most aptly seems characterized as emphasizing individual development and life-span approaches to ready people to manage life tasks and transitions (Super, 1990). Career counseling seems best characterized as emphasizing individual design and narrative approaches to articulate a coherent identity and purpose with regard to a life-career (Cochran, 1997; Savickas, 2011a). Each career intervention model uses different methods that concentrate on assisting people to fit themselves to occupations (guidance), fit work into their lives (education), and use work to construct and advance their life stories (counseling). In so doing, each intervention model addresses a central question: "What occupation do I choose?" (guidance); "How do I fit work into my life?" (education); and "How can I use work to make my life more meaningful and complete and in a way that matters to society?" (counseling).

Vocational guidance: matching self to setting

Performing in an occupational role requires making informed educational and vocational choices. Vocational guidance helps us match ourselves to educational and occupational settings. It attends to the objective content of (a) our self-characteristics such as interests, abilities, and personality and (b) work environment factors that require and reward those characteristics. It thereby helps us identify the types of people we resemble most and the work environments those people populate. The central intervention goal of the vocational guidance model is *congruence* between self and occupational setting (Holland, 1997). When we match ourselves to settings we become actors who fit in to corresponding work environments that allow us to enact our scripts (Savickas, 2011a). Vocational guidance may best serve us when we need to affirm an expressed occupational choice, identify alternative educational or occupational pathways to consider, and determine what occupations fit us best.

Career education: managing tasks and transitions

Humans confront manifold tasks and transitions over the life course. Career education helps us develop adaptability for managing tasks and transitions associated with constructing a career and designing our lives. Career adaptability involves acquiring the attitudes, beliefs, and competencies needed for career planning, decision making, exploration, and problem solving (Savickas, 2002). Education methods help us adapt to life tasks and manage career transitions. Career education activities place work within the context of our whole lives. Career education attends to subjective processes of (a) patterning life across domains of school, work, play, family, and community and (b) readying self to make career decisions by learning necessary planning attitudes and decision-making skills. It thereby helps us develop concern about our futures, control of the decision-making process, curiosity to

explore educational and vocational options, and confidence to make decisions and deal with barriers to our career development (Savickas, 2002). The central intervention goal of career education is *adaptability* to navigate tasks and transitions (Savickas, 1997a). When we manage self over the life course we become agents who fit work into our lives (Savickas, 2011a). Career education may best serve us when we need to learn how to balance life roles, gain occupational information, deal with making decisions, manage transitions, and adapt to change.

Career counseling: making meaning

Knowing and narrating our own life stories fills our work roles and occupational careers with purpose and direction. Career counseling denotes an interpersonal process of helping people comprehend their life stories and design their life-careers (Savickas, 2011a). Counseling methods help us determine what meaning we give to work in our lives. Career counseling concerns the purpose work holds for us with regard to our unique life stories. Career counseling activities construe the themes that pattern our lives and give meaning to our life-careers. Career counseling attends to the dynamics that shape our identities and self-concepts. It thereby helps us reflexively comprehend and coherently narrate how we may use work to advance our life projects. The central intervention goal of career counseling is *narratability* to reflect on and retell our own stories to foster meaning (Savickas, 2011a). As we do so, our stories tell us just as we tell them. When we know our own stories we succeed as authors, interpreters, and enactors of a life-career that holds meaning for us and that matters to others within our own particular personal, social, cultural and other contexts (Savickas, 2011a). Career counseling may best serve us when we need to construe our lives holistically and comprehend how we can use work to be ourselves more completely.

People may thus benefit from three types of career intervention: (a) vocational guidance in the P-E fit tradition when we most need to choose an occupation by increasing our self-knowledge and understanding of the world of work; (b) career education in the developmental tradition when we most need to adapt to transitions and change by improving our ability to cope with predictable tasks of readying for and engaging in work roles and to deal with fluctuating work and work circumstances; and (c) career counseling in the emerging constructivist, constructionist, and narrative tradition when we most need to clarify our identities, purpose, and direction in life and how we may use work to become more complete. In short, guidance focuses on what occupation to pick, education concerns how to prepare for and participate in work roles, and counseling construes why purpose, or intentionality results from engaging in work consistent with our life stories. In this way, making the narrative turn adds the career as story perspective and propels a move toward blurring the line between career counseling and psychotherapy. It does so by moving from a primary focus on the mechanism of guidance (matching persons' traits to occupations) and the organicism of education (managing tasks and transitions through career stages) to an emphasis on the contextualism of counseling (shaping the meaning of persons' career stories).

Infusing career intervention with narrative, psychological constructivism, and social constructionism has now yielded an identifiable collection of career counseling models that comprise three categories (Savickas, 2011b). One category contains models based in psychological constructivism such as those of Cochran (1997), Neimeyer (1992), Peavy (1997),

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and Savickas (1997b). A second category contains social constructionist, ecological, and systemic models such as those advanced by Cook, O'Brien, and Heppner (2004), Patton and McMahon (2006), Pryor and Bright (2005), and Young and Valach (1996). A third category contains models based squarely in narrative and includes those of Brott (2001), Cochran (1997), Guichard (2008), and Savickas (2011a). Clearly, the central character of the present story, narrative, plays an increasingly prominent part in shaping the ongoing story of the careers field, particularly with regard to its move to advance the theory and practice of career counseling.

NARRATIVE'S NEXT CHAPTER

Long ago, the careers field cast positivism as the lead character in its story. As it begins the second century of this story dating to 1909, the field increasingly gives constructionism and narrative center stage. The voluminous and accumulating literature dealing with narrative provides ample evidence in this regard. Narrative's move from a subordinate, to a supporting, to eventually a lead character will result in large part from dramatic changes in the storylines of work and career in the post-industrial world. The predominant storyline of an unstable and transformed work world seems now more than ever to prompt career theory and practice to more closely align with counseling as an interpersonal process of helping people to shape and design their lives.

Using narrative principles and practice methods offers a new and potentially effective pathway for empowering people today with the capability and confidence to create the inner stability needed to navigate through turbulent times brought on by globalization, burgeoning information technology, and economic collapse. Well-established links exist between work and well-being (see Blustein, 2008; Paul and Moser, 2009). Need continually increases for new and better approaches to assist workers to cope with life in the digital age and global society (Savickas et al., 2009). The realities of social, historical, political, economic, and other life circumstances impinge upon us all and particularly the less empowered and less privileged who must deal with even greater barriers to a satisfying and self-determined work life (Blustein, 2006). All of these factors coalesce to indicate that counseling for work and career remains vitally important, and perhaps has never been more so in our history. Narrative's role in this endeavor will, by all accounts, most probably grow only more pivotal.

Making the narrative turn offers positive direction for the careers field that has long been viewed as residing on the margins of psychology and counseling. Narrative's next chapter will likely involve solidifying a transformation in the predominant conception of career intervention from a match-making to a meaning-making perspective. Continuing to adopt and advance narrative counseling principles and practices will most definitely help to transform career counseling from a straightforward, logical pursuit to a complex, therapeutic endeavor to inscribe people's lives with purpose and direction. In so doing, narrative will very likely play a principal role in helping the careers field realize its long-sought more mainstream position within the field of counseling and psychotherapy. The next chapter in narrative's story in the careers field, then, could very well involve more effectively dispelling long-held distinctions between career and personal counseling and perhaps evolving career counseling to include narrative career therapy.

Advancing narrative and its role in developing career counseling theories and practice methods may also yield the most desirable effect of attracting more students and professionals

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to the careers field. That is because infusing it with narrative makes it more recognizably like counseling generally that proceeds in the more familiar and practical language of stories. Rather than perpetuating a perspective on career assessment and counseling as boring, lacking prestige, and requiring low-level skill, training students and professionals in narrative career theory and practice to augment venerable matching approaches would foster a more enlivening and engaging view. Considering its past and projecting its future, the careers field has clearly made the narrative turn. This change in direction should well propel it along in its quest to meaningfully construe and construct work and career in human life and empower people to design their lives.

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