Richard A. Young · José F. Domene
Ladislav Valach *Editors*

Counseling and Action

Toward Life-Enhancing Work, Relationships, and Identity

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 Springer

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Chapter 1
Counseling and Action

Richard A. Young, José F. Domene and Ladislav Valach

Counseling is an action. It has a goal and develops goals. It occurs in time and space. It involves the conscious and unconscious behavior of both clients and counselors. It depends on their internal and external resources such as their ability to communicate with each other, having a place where counseling occurs, and a program in which it is lodged. Counseling also involves both counselors and clients taking steps together to realize the goals they have for it. They steer, control, and regulate their joint and individual actions by communication and cognitive and affective processes. Finally, from both the counselor's and the client's individual and shared perspectives, counseling is jointly motivated through their negotiation of goals. Thus, counseling is full of action. It is an action, it is about action, and it emerges from action and leads to action. Action is the very fabric of counseling.

Action and Counseling: Traditional Views

Traditionally counseling and counseling psychology have not been very explicit about action, although it has been and remains important to these disciplines. For example, it is not a term Feltham and Dryden (1993) defined in their dictionary of counseling. It is included as a term neither in the fourth edition of the *Handbook of Counseling Psychology* (Brown and Lent 2008) nor in the more recent *Oxford Handbook of Counseling Psychology* (Altmaier and Hansen 2011). It does not appear in the definition of counseling psychology recently adopted by the Canadian

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Psychological Association (Bedi et al. 2011) or in the definition of the profession previously developed by the American Psychological Association (American Psychological Association 1999). Action has been so obvious and taken-for-granted in the counseling literature that only seldom have authors reflected on it in depth (e.g., Howard 1984) and virtually never have they offered an explicit conceptualization of it. Where the term action is used in this literature, it often refers to something that counseling serves to prepare clients for. To counsel often meant to help a client come to a direction or decision relative to an action. For example, in tradition of social cognitive theory, action is understood as execution of cognitive processes (Bandura 1986). In the counseling literature, for example, Hill and O'Brien (1999) in their introductory text suggest that action is the final stage of counseling that is based on prior stages of exploration and insight. Many authors continue to recognize that action is an important component of counseling, most frequently as a result of counseling or characteristic of some final phase. Egan (2007), for example, is particularly articulate in proposing action as a counseling outcome and has identified counselor skills to facilitate client action. Yes, the client's action is an outcome of counseling. Because of the pervading notion that action follows from counseling, but not part of the counseling process, one can see how counseling came to be understood as a kind of preparatory stage for action in which the problems are articulated, self-insight is gained, information transmitted and processed, and so forth. However, that is not the only understanding of action and counseling. Counseling and action involve much more than considering action as a kind of final stage or outcome behavior to which counseling contributes. Indeed, to relegate action simply to what may happen following counseling may be to substantially undervalue its primacy in counseling itself, as we and others argue in this book.

Although practicing counselors may not use the term *action* often, they may have a different view of action and counseling than the ones represented in traditional counseling texts. Counselors, like people generally, attribute their own and others' behavior as goal-directed (Vallacher 1987). They organize their own engagement in counseling as directed toward certain goals. For example, in the client–counselor encounter, the counselor is aware of or asks herself, "what does the client want to communicate? What does he want to hear? What feelings does he want me to understand?" These examples can be multiplied a hundredfold in every aspect of the counselor's work. In effect, the counselor is using a naïve theory of action (Heider 1958), more recently referred to as a theory of mind (Paal and Bereczkei 2007; Tomasello et al. 2005). However, it is not only how the counselors make sense of their own their clients' behavior that is important. Clients are also constructing their current behavior as goal-directed and their lives as a series of goal-directed actions. This way of thinking on the part of clients and counselors is particularly important as a starting point for the book that follows. While the naïve theory of action to some extent captures what is going on in the client–counselor encounter, a much fuller and more explicit understanding of action in counseling is needed if its full potential is to be realized. Counselors want to understand both the complexity of what is happening between themselves and their clients and the actions in which clients are engaging in their lives. Such complexity demands a framework that reflects these phenomena fully.

The purpose of this book is to elaborate on the complex and important role that action has in counseling. It addresses not only the significant issue of the actions that clients take as a result of counseling, but also, importantly, how counseling itself is an action process. Furthermore, it connects the actions prior to, during and after counseling to important life projects and careers that can be life-enhancing, or that could be life defeating without counseling.

The Challenges of Counseling and Action

The challenge of considering counseling and action is embedded in some fundamental issues in psychology, society, and how professionals intervene in people's lives. The counseling literature has recognized the significant conditions and social changes that our society has undergone in recent decades, including globalization, economic turbulence, regional wars and conflicts, technology development, significant migration of refugees and other migrants, and so forth (e.g., Moodley et al. 2013; Yakushko and Morgan 2012). At the same time, developments in counseling brought about by new research, the global expansion of the field, an increase in the range of applications for counseling practice, broad societal expectations of its important role in addressing social problems, and increased sophistication of methods and models of counseling have pointed to the complexity of counseling.

The disciplines of counseling and counseling psychology have been scrutinized and critiqued on a range of issues. Some critiques have been epistemological, some concerned the relationship between theory and practice, others complained about the conceptual antiquity of counseling theories, and still others pointed to the social change counseling failed to mirror (e.g., Murdock et al. 2012; Scheel et al. 2011; Vera and Speight 2003). There have also been numerous attempts to introduce to counseling relevant concepts from other disciplines such as feminism, developmental psychology, general and social psychology, and cultural anthropology (e.g., Gielen et al. 2008; LaFromboise et al. 1993; Yoder et al. 2012; Suzuki et al. 2005). It became clear that a contemporary approach to counseling would have to develop from a dialogue with these approaches and by learning from them.

Matching these social changes, in the last 30 years there has been a creative explosion in formulating new approaches to counseling (e.g., Gold 2010; Monk et al. 2008; Nelson 2010). Some of these approaches are characterized by specific innovations, for example, narrative, relational, and emotionally focused therapies; others are considered comprehensive approaches, for example, systems theory. Rather than being simply another way of doing things, another counseling manual, approaches such as narrative, relational, and emotionally focused represent important new ways to frame and understand counseling in the context of the complexity of people's lives and changing conditions.

Counseling and counseling psychology can be challenged because of their conceptual framework. Historically, counseling psychology had differentiated itself from clinical psychology by focusing on difficult but typical life concerns and

issues rather than psychopathology. This differentiation led counseling psychology to posit human development as one of its underlying conceptual frameworks. But counseling psychology involves much more than is addressed in developmental psychology. Developmental psychology as a conceptual framework for counseling psychology has been supplemented in recent years by multicultural (e.g., Hansen 2010), relational-cultural (e.g., Jordan 2001), and other critical perspectives, as well as attention to social justice as a guiding framework for practice (e.g., Prilleltensky and Nelson 2002). Similarly, counseling and counseling psychology are much indebted to vocational and career psychology in which everyday life issues, of which work is the major part, have been discussed, conceptualized, and analyzed. Despite the importance of everyday work, it cannot provide a blueprint for the many other activities in which individuals engage. This challenge has been recognized and addressed (e.g., Blustein 2006; Richardson 2012).

These significant social developments in counseling psychology point to the need for an inclusive conceptual framework that can speak simultaneously to context and the person within context. The authors of this book invite us to consider action as such a framework. Action is meaningful in various contexts and among different language groups and reflects the social construction of many of these perspectives.

In the first section of this book, the authors concentrate on a number of important issues and ways they have been recently conceptualized, namely, relationship, constructivism, intentionality, systems, values, culture, emotion, and identity. These issues are central to current counseling theory and practice. They are also issues that counselors cannot but address on a daily basis. The authors of the chapters in Part I recognize that new, more sophisticated frameworks are needed to adequately respond to changing social conditions, new knowledge, and different expectations for counseling. In addition, each author provides an important and different discussion relevant to contextual action theory—the theory we describe and comment on in the second part of this book. Each chapter in Part I implicitly points to contextual action theory as a comprehensive conceptual framework for counseling practice. Further development in counseling suggests their integration in light of action and action theory. These eight issues are briefly introduced in the following.

Relation

In planning, seeking, engaging in, and experiencing counseling, be it as a client or counselor, one is relating to another person. This relating implies communicating and interacting with the other person and thus implicitly formulating an understanding of intentional reciprocal behavior. Current developments in various disciplines allows us to see such an encounter in relational terms that is, not simply as a meeting of two individuals but as a relationship, a relating (e.g., Gergen 2009b). This important theoretical innovation reaches far beyond the situation of a personal encounter in its application. The physical and social world is not defined as a universe of objects but of relationships (ontology); the process of gaining knowledge is not

understood as mirroring an external reality that exists outside the mind but as a process of relating (epistemology). Consequently, contemporary counseling theory and practice need to consider these views, incorporate them into its conceptual framework, and implement them in counseling practice, especially in light of the centrality of the therapeutic relationship.

Constructivism

Constructivism and constructionism are terms that have become increasingly more common in counseling. Our worlds, our individual and social lives are no longer considered givens to be uncovered, as if they are preexisting artifacts waiting for the archeologist's trowel and pick axe. Constructivism, which has permeated disciplines ranging from quantum physics to art and architecture, suggests that people are active in engaging in their worlds and constructing it as they engage in it. The relating that we described above is about something. New realities are not solely coincidental sediments of interacting, exchanging, and relating. They are new constructions, results of the process of constructing. It has been recognized that this process is more than the instrumental building or assemblage while handling material objects (Berger and Luckman 1966). It has also been suggested that constructing is the core process of our existence and whatever we do, we engage in a process of constructing (Gergen 2009; Searle 1995). Constructionism is important for counseling theory and practice. Clients in counseling are engaged in constructing processes while in counseling and in their lives outside of counseling.

When the relational and constructivist views are linked, counselors are able to implement the concept of relational construction instead of "providing information," "using counseling skills," or "finding an occupation suited the personality of the client."

Identity

There is no doubt of the importance of identity for the understanding and practice of counseling, indeed to Western psychology generally. For example, it has been integrally involved in the development of adolescence and the transition to adulthood (e.g., Erikson 1963, 1968). It is also seen as important to all phases of life. It is a construct that is particularly important in counseling because many life problems have been conceptualized around issues of identity and the self. For example, there is an ever-increasing literature on the development of bi-cultural identity (e.g., Ellis and Chen 2013; Saad et al. 2013). Even more to the point is the claim of Hermans and Dimaggio (2007) that, irrespective of issues of migration, in this modern society youth are faced with the struggle of bi-cultural identity formation in the context of global and the local cultures. Thus, we are confronted with the conflict between the general traditional belief that identities are stable and operate as a determinant

of one's behavior, on the one hand, and the realization, that identities are striven for, goal-directed processes, being developed in the ongoing life of a person in an active way and do not only serve as a depositary for or sedimentation of experiences.

Systems

Counselors are the first to recognize the impact of the considerable range of influences on people's lives and on the counseling process itself. However, they are challenged by how to address these multiple sources of influence. In the middle of the twentieth century, biological processes and individual and social processes were conceptualized as systems (e.g., Mead 1934; Parsons 1949; Von Bertalanffy 1975). A system and its environment contain a number of well-defined processes conceptualized in a complex relationship to each other. It allows for the integration of empirically evaluated and theoretically postulated functions and structures in a process order that can serve as complex hypotheses when applied to specific target processes such as joint behavior or counseling processes. Conceptualizing clients as persons existing within an individual social system, and attending to the nature of that system provides a viable way for counselors to explore the important influences in their clients' lives. Thus, the time of studying isolated variables is being replaced by research strategies utilizing complex and differentiated modeling of the target processes. Contemporary counseling theory cannot ignore these strategies.

Intentionality

Western culture is replete with the language of intentionality. The legal system, our relationship with others, our sense of responsibility, and agency and morality are all grounded on an understanding of intentionality. Counseling is also full of intentionality, but it is not limited to, for example, a client's claim, "I intend to give up my dependence on drugs" or "I intend to become an opera singer." Indeed, these examples are not as critical in counseling as the intention of the present moment, represented, for example, in the question a counselor asks herself cited above, "What does the client want to hear?" There is also the issue of the joint intentionality that is generated between the counselor and client in response to the question, "What is what we are doing about?" Counseling at least implicitly assumes that processes such as engaging in counseling and constructing one's family life are intentional processes. However, it is less clear on how intentions arise, and their relation to action. Do our intentions follow our actions? In devising a counseling theory and procedures, it is important to go beyond the concept of intentionality in popular discourse. Its historical context and current development in philosophy, psychology, and social sciences can assist in understanding its meaning and importance. In the recent development of counseling there have been several attempts made to systematically include intentional thinking in theorizing and practice.

Culture

Intentionally constructing relational systems in counseling and in work, family, and social life does not occur in a vacuum. Culture provides the content and context of these activities (e.g., Markova 2012). In the past, counseling theories often took the cultural embedding and roots of their work for granted, as these were considered unchangeable and definitely ordered. Counseling practitioners always have the challenge of being in and constructing the culture of the present moment, although they may have been less aware of this process as active cultural construction. However, for theorists and practitioners, culture, and specifically multi-cultural counseling have become central to the counseling enterprise (e.g., Comas-Diaz 2012; Fouad and Arredondo 2007; Pedersen et al. 2008). These and other authors have suggested that culture should be observed and considered in counseling; that it is more than a number of language bound behavioral patterns. Instead, culture has been conceptualized as an ongoing process that impacts actions, is constructed by actions, and is realized by and in actions (Boesch 2012). These actions are individual as well as joint; they are actions in projects as well as in careers. Thus, the challenge for counseling and counseling psychology is to be knowledgeable of the traditions that study culture not only comparatively but also in the process of culture making and changing in our everyday lives.

Values

The relational, constructionist, and intentional system embedded in a larger cultural context described heretofore might give counselors enough instrumental power to achieve specific goals with their clients. However, there is still no guarantee that this power will be used for the betterment and well being of people, humanity, and our world. Thus, it has been suggested that, in their practice, counselors adhere to certain values in regards to their goals and means and assumptions about their image of a person (Cooper 2009). Values do not solely guide the counselors' personal behavior; they also guide the conceptual and practical decisions in their work. For example, the notions of the responsible, goal-directed human being, of equality among people, and particularly between clients and professionals, are value driven. They are values to which counselors can adhere even if they are only implicitly represented in the counseling process.

Emotion

Heesacher and Bradley (1997) acknowledged the primacy of emotion in counseling. More recent evidence has suggested that emotion has become somewhat of a *hot topic*, for example, the recognition of emotionally focused therapy as an empirically supported treatment, the extensive research of emotion in psychotherapy

(Greenberg and Pascual-Leone 2006), and the interest in emotion based on neuro-imaging studies (Barrett and Wager 2006). As we all know, human beings in their individual and joint processes, be it in every everyday lives or in counseling, are not simply functional and calculating problem solvers operating in relational and intentional complex systems while constructing their world and themselves. Human beings are, first and foremost, emotional creatures at their best and their worst. Thus, emotion represents processes that are an inherent part of every action, but which are characterized by specific psychological, behavioral, and physiological features. The role and function of emotions that are not extreme are particularly well recognized when these emotions are missing. For example, many clients complain that they do not feel anything the whole day and cannot make a decision or generate energy. In this case in counseling and psychotherapy, we experience that the whole action system of such a client collapses. This might lead to the premature conclusion that if emotions were reinstalled, the action systems would follow as if emotion and action were separate. Accordingly, a contemporary counseling approach must integrate the emotional processes in all part of its theorizing and practice.

Action in Counseling Practice

In the next 18 chapters of this book, we have joined a number of other authors to make a strong case for the role of action in counseling. In Part I, each author addressed how action is reflected in one of the critical issues in the counseling field identified above. In Part II, we propose the contextual theory of action as applied to counseling and return specifically to the critical issues to demonstrate how they are included and addressed in contextual action theory. It is fair of you, the reader, to raise the honest and forthright concern at this juncture, we have provided the framework and addressed the big issues, but how does it actually work in counseling practice. The following eight chapters (Part III) address how action theory can be used in counseling with various populations or for different counseling issues. The authors of these chapters have had direct experience with contextual action theory as counselors and researchers. Each chapter reveals, in a different way, the utility of contextual action theory as either a framework to understand a problem or client and to suggest ways to intervene with clients based on this understanding. Finally, in Part IV, we distill a number of counseling processes and procedures based on contextual action theory.

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Part I
Action and Counseling Approaches and Issues

Chapter 2
Designing Projects for Career Construction

Mark L. Savickas

Counseling has the goal of encouraging clients to take actions to improve their lives, and these actions occur both within the counseling session and outside it. The present book, unlike most books on counseling, highlights this action. The editors propose goal-directed action as an integrative conceptualization for counseling practice. They offer action theory as a comprehensive approach that may be used to integrate models of practice that concentrate on narratives, on relationships, or on emotions. The editors also highlight action theory as a general approach that applies to various life domains including career counseling, relationship counseling, crisis counseling, and so forth. In this book, they have organized colleagues and collaborators to discuss how they approach actions from a range of theoretical perspectives. The goal for the chapters is to systematically relate diverse counseling models to the contextual action theory approach.

The present chapter applies the action theory model to counseling for career construction (Savickas 2011). This chapter explains how practitioners view action while conducting career construction counseling. Thus, this chapter concentrates on a single life domain, namely, the theater of work. While action has always been an implicit part of the career construction model, its central role has been underdeveloped both conceptually and practically. So, I welcome the opportunity to closely study contextual action theory, relate it to career construction counseling, and then use it to further elaborate and improve career construction counseling theory. The chapter begins by describing seven perspectives shared by action theory and career construction counseling theory.

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Perspectives Shared by Action Theory and Career Construction Counseling

Action theory (AT) and career construction counseling theory (CT) share in common several critical features. They both emphasize the flow from practice to theory rather than from theory to practice; the fidelity and fluidity of individuals; the epistemology of social constructionism; and the prominent role of identity and adaptability as meta-competencies.

Practice and Theory

AT and CT both begin with practice. Rather than developing a theory and then applying it to practice, AT and CT theorize practice. Counseling practice is always ahead of theory because practitioners must respond to the needs and goals that clients bring to consultation. These issues emerge from their current context, which itself develops faster than theory can account for it. Theory must, in a sense, catch up with the realties that clients bring to counseling. Accordingly, both AT and CT concentrate on the actions of individuals, the context in which the actions occur, and the meaning they give to their actions. Both AT and CT recognize that career development theorists have been preoccupied with confirming the veracity of their models of vocational behavior, without examining how their theories might be applied to assisting individuals in counseling. For many years professors and practitioners mistakenly took theories of career development to be theories of counseling, but they are not (Savickas 2012). Career development theories portray careers yet say little about how to intervene in fostering them. Practitioners need counseling theories that provide them with models for and methods of intervention. Also, models and methods of vocational guidance are just that, they are methods for guiding and advising not counseling. Taking models of vocational guidance to be career counseling models has led to many counselors and professors of counseling eschewing an interest in what has been called career counseling but usually performed as vocational guidance. Both AT and CT concentrate squarely on developing counseling models that theorize effective practices and integrate theories of career development and career counseling.

Individuals as Fixed and Fluid

Young et al. (2011, pp. 88–89) contrast theories that take essentialist and narrativist perspectives on human beings. Essentialists concentrate on the stability of enduring attributes of the self, including personality traits and vocational interests. Narrativists concentrate on the flexibility of the self as fluid through experiences and changing by narrating life-shaping stories. The premise of essentialism or

narrativism taken to its extreme generates difficult problems in conceptualizing counseling practice. AT and CT avoid either extreme in staking out a middle ground that avoids an either/or split position. AT recognizes the long-term persistence of an individual's identity while at the same time acknowledging an ongoing process that constructs and reconstructs identity (Young et al. 2011, p. 90). CT endorses both the fidelity and flexibility of individuals in viewing the steadfastness of self-as-actor in maintaining a persona and reputation and viewing the flexibility of self-as-author in responding to new contexts.

Social Constructionist Epistemology

Both AT and CT apply a social constructionist epistemology in asserting that people construct their own lives and careers through action. Both models attend to the social nature of construction by viewing it as "joint action" or "co-construction". Actions that construct selves are viewed as performing narratives that are rife with intentionality, meaning-making, and mattering. Narrative is about who you are, action is about performing you on a social stage. Through action in the theater of work, an individual becomes the story that they constructed during career counseling.

Meta-Competencies

It appears that AT and CT agree that the actions which construct the self and the life are informed and shaped by two meta-competencies. The term meta-competence refers to the general ability to learn and apply more specific competencies or skills within a domain. Hall and Chandler (2004, p. 9) described two meta-competencies that foster navigating transitions, namely identity and adaptability. Relying on self-knowledge and knowing when and how to make career changes fosters the smoothness of transitions. For AT, the meta-competencies that direct action involve identity and goal-directed process (Young et al. 2011, p. 17). CT also highlights two meta-competencies in terms of the self-as-author's identity and the self-as-agent's adaptability. In career construction theory, identity involves an understanding of self in relation to social roles and environmental contexts while adaptability involves the readiness and resources needed to cope with developmental tasks, occupational transitions, and work traumas in these social roles and environmental contexts.

Motivation

Both AT and CT view humans as being in action. CT fully accepts George Kelly's (1955) premise that human beings are a form of motion. To be alive is to move; to

be human is to act. This premise means that neither CT nor AT need to focus on the issue of motivation as fueling or energizing behavior because people are always in movement. Instead of concentrating on motivation—or how to make people move—these two theories concentrate attention on individuals' direction and style of movement. CT sees the direction of movement as toward equilibrium with the environment. When a current adaptation or *punctuated equilibrium* is upset, individuals move to restore equilibrium or stasis, either at the previous level or at a higher level that is simultaneously more stable and flexible.

Adaptation Projects

Furthermore, CT agrees completely with AT that counseling is a goal-directed project. While the goals for AT pertain to most life domains and adjustment issues, the goals for CT deal with making a transition in a work role. Young et al. (2011) defined transitions as goal-directed actions that are most readily understood as a project. From this astute perspective, career counseling clients seek assistance in their projects of adapting to a work-role transition. The goal of CT is to assist clients in making transitions. Young et al. (2011) point out that counseling itself is also a project. For CT, the project of counseling is constructing the client's adaptation project and encouraging actions to complete a transition.

Action/Project/Career or Actor/Agent/Author

Both AT and CT view action as behavior infused with meaning. CT views action across a panorama of actor, agent, and author. Initially, it surveys the person engaging in the action, that is, the actor. The actor portrays some character in each action episode. This character may be viewed subjectively as a self-concept and objectively as a persona with a reputation. As children develop their characters they slowly become agents in their own lives. As agents they direct their action in striving for goals, which eventually become hierarchically arranged projects. As emerging adults, individuals begin to author a life story. This narrative identity conveys what is meaningful to them across projects. The binding power of narrative continuity and coherence transforms the sequence of projects into a consequential career. So the panorama of CT views action as involving the behavior of the actor, striving of the agent, and explanation of the author.

The CT language of actor, agent, and author relates directly to the AT language of action, project, and career. The actor is about goal-directed action in the short-term; the agent is about projects that link actions across a mid-term; and the author is about career and the long-term meanings of action projects. AT focuses attention squarely on agency and clients as agents in their own lives. CT views agency as "adaptability," one of the two meta-competencies for constructing a career. Because

AT shares more with CT's view of the agent than with its views of the actor or author, the remainder of this chapter will examine the relationships between AT's innovative conception of career counseling as a transition project and CT's conception of counseling to increase agency and adaptation.

This topic merits attention because, in sum, AT and CT both emphasize that practice precedes and informs theory, individuals are both steadfast and flexible, individuals co-construct their selves and identities using the cultural resources provided to them, the meta-competencies of identity and adaptability can play a prominent role in steering and informing goal-directed action to bridge transitions, human beings move so motivation is about steering behavior, and career counseling is a transitive project. The next section describes how AT can inform CT, in particular elaborating CT's views on career counseling as a project that seeks to increase clients' agency and adaptation as they transit from school-to-work, occupation-to-occupation, and job-to-job. This inquiry begins with examining how AT and CT, despite sharing many perspectives, rest on different premises about counseling as a project.

Premises of Career Construction Counseling

AT and CT differ in how they conceptualize the transition project and how to approach it in counseling. Young et al. (2011) prefer to view transition projects as not predetermined. They recommend approaching transition projects as the client sees them and then jointly constructing the projects with the appropriate goal-directed action. While it is difficult to disagree with this view, CT prefers viewing transition projects through the lens of socially constructed expectations or developmental tasks. The tasks that compose the transition project, and conceptualized by the individual are in a broader sense predetermined by society's grand narrative of career. Young et al. (2011, p. 16) accurately see the developmentalist view of CT as proposing what is necessary for a successful transition. They prefer instead to look at what is actually happening in the actions of the transition and how a person conceptualizes and organizes these actions.

As an example of the difference in AT and CT premises, let us consider a case that involves a mother helping her daughter apply to college (Young et al. 2011, p. 14). Taking a psychosocial view, CT conceptualizes this action as implementing a choice, hopefully based on crystallized preferences and a specific decision. Young and colleagues prefer not to view this as a developmental task but rather focus on the intentions of the person involved. They encourage counselors to appreciate how the person involved views the action, that is, what they see the behaviors as being about. It seems that AT focuses on the current actions and the intentionality that informs it, while CT includes the antecedents and consequences that shape the present behavior. Of course, there is overlap, yet the differences lead CT to a different view of counseling as a project.

Transition Tasks as Habitus

Young et al. (2011) state that there may be substantial overlap in how a person conceptualizes actions and what is expected culturally and chronologically. Possibly, AT would accept the construct of *habitus* to explain the overlap. The French sociologist Bourdieu (1977) introduced the construct of habitus describing it as an internalization of social structures that inhabit the mind as acquired mental schemata and expectations. Developmental tasks seem to function as a habitus in supplying individuals with meanings they can use to interpret their transitions and careers. Developmental tasks represent an interpenetration of objective divisions of the social world and an individual's subjective vision of them, causing a correspondence and interplay between an individual's mental structures and a community's social structures (Guichard and Cassar 1998). They offer an account that people use to understand themselves and others. On the one hand, developmental tasks enable individuals to think about and take stock of their transitions and adaptation by using social schemata provided by society. On the other hand, developmental tasks enable other people including counselors to comprehend an individual's personal experience and private meaning by embedding it in and systematically organizing it according to a dominant social structure. In addition to providing a commonsense framework, developmental tasks synchronize individuals to their culture by telling them in advance how their transitions should proceed. Individuals enact their unique version of these transition scripts in a particular historical era, given location, and specific opportunity structure that discriminates by race, age, sex, religion, and class. As a social script for progressing through an orderly sequence of predictable tasks in a cycle of adaptation, developmental tasks give hope and security to many people. Nevertheless, there are other people whose experience does not fit the story. Instead of progressing in transit to new adaptation, some people encounter barriers that force them to regress, drift, flounder, stagnate, or stop.

Adaptation Tasks

The CT views the project of transition from the perspective of a pre-determined script of effective responses for making an adaptation. Simply stated, the outline of *adaptive actions* includes orientation, exploration, stabilization, maintenance, and disengagement. The script can be applied to the example of applying to a college. The CT examines the adaptive process beginning with the need to orient oneself to the project of attending college. It quickly moves to the exploration of potential colleges to attend based on self and circumstances. This exploration eventually leads to a commitment to a particular college or small group of colleges and the task of applying to them. Having secured a position at a college, the individual stabilizes that choice by enrolling in the college, then mastering its requirements and maintain progress through the curriculum, and eventually disengaging from that punctuated adaptation by graduating. However before graduation, the individual must initiate

a new project involving the school-to work-transition. Similarly to AT, CT would attend to how the individual views the task of college application, but would view the client's meaning-making and actions through a social lens of expectations about its place in a sequence of adaptation.

The counselor would use the adaptation script as a habitus to understand the individual's narrative about the college application and the transition project. This is where the counselor's expertise enters the picture. Counselors bring their own expert knowledge and professional skill to the collaboration. Counselors are experts in how to help individuals grow in self-knowledge and develop as a person during transitions. While clients know themselves and are experts on their own lives, counselors know about transitions. Together through co-construction of transitive narratives and joint action, client and counselor may approach the transition project by merging the client's knowledge of content with the counselor's knowledge of process. Of course, counselors realize that there are limits to client self-knowledge. CT acknowledges that some clients are strangers in their own lives; they may even use denial and keep secrets to hinder adaptation to a transition. To know their lives and learn how to make transitions is why many clients seek counseling.

Although AT and CT may approach the action project of transition using slightly different premises, they share the same fundamental counseling goal. Action is about moving toward goals. In the language of AT, the goal of counseling is to increase client agency or acting power by establishing goals and ways to achieve them (Young et al. 2011, p. 25). In the language of CT, the goals of career counseling are to increase client "adaptability, narratability, and activity" (Savickas et al. 2009, p. 245). Counselors use these superordinate goals to steer or guide what happens during counseling. But first, the counselor has to form a working alliance in which to establish these goals and have a client commit to engage in the processes that move toward these goals. According to AT, the counselor steers toward the goal of what is useful to the client, controls the session by identifying steps needed to reach goals, and regulates the session by responding to affect and meaning-making processes. CT has a highly developed structure for steering joint action, identifying steps in the counseling project, and regulating the session. The processes of steering, remaining on task, and regulating sessions have been explained thoroughly elsewhere (Savickas 2011). Less attention has been paid to inducting clients in career counseling by co-constructing what is to ensue as a project for joint action. Until now, CT has not fully elaborated how to induct clients into counseling at the beginning of a consultation. Taking AT's perspective, this induction may be viewed as project management.

Defining Counseling Goals and Designing the Transition Project

AT characterizes counseling with three phases or functional steps (Young et al. 2011, p. 188). After establishing a working alliance, the first phase involves identifying pertinent ongoing projects and then orienting client to the goals and processes

of counseling through exploration of their presenting concerns. The second phase involves working on projects and monitoring client progress. The third and final phase involves reviewing changes that have been made and discussing how to stabilize these accomplishments. As noted earlier, CT has well-articulated procedures for what AT calls phases two and three. CT could advance by attending more thoroughly to what AT calls phase one, identifying projects. To do so in this chapter, I apply to CT the metaphor of *project management* from the business world. In industry and in CT, a project denotes a temporary endeavor with a clear beginning and end undertaken to meet unique goals and objectives (Nokes 2007). Project management begins with carefully planning and methodically organizing what will occur during counseling to achieve those specific goals. CT practitioners do this careful planning and methodical organizing by following a routine with eight elements to be described in turn: goals, projects, trajectory, context, emotions, readiness, resources, and audience.

Working Alliance and Counseling Goals

The initiation of the client–counselor relationship is, of course, a critical step because as counseling begins, so it goes. The counselor must consciously and conscientiously establish a working alliance. The two words of *working* and *alliance* are each important. Alliance means a relationship based on trust, empathy, and encouragement. Working means moving toward some goal or outcome. Without a clear vision of a joint goal, it is difficult to firmly establish a working alliance, much less take coordinated action that works. CT tries to make this clear to clients from its opening inquiry. After greeting a client, and maybe some small talk, the counselor asks a critical question.

Counselors begin the professional relationship by asking a client how counseling may be useful to her or him. This question about goals is asked in more than one way to ensure that the working alliance begins with a joint goal. A second way that counselors ask about clients' goals is to inquire what they would like to accomplish by the end of that session and by the end of counseling. In posing this question in two or more ways, counselors signal to clients that the ensuing interaction is a collaboration, one consisting of joint goal-directed actions that address the project under construction. The inquiry is intended to suggest to clients that they take the lead in doing the work on the project. This suggestion is important because a main predictor of successful counseling outcomes is that the client works harder than the counselor. If counselors do most of the work, as they sometimes do in performing vocational guidance and test interpretation, then their clients advance only minimally in constructing their projects.

Counselors listen closely to how a client describes a goal for counseling because that goal may already be implicitly achieved in the way she or he speaks about the goal. For many clients, what they seek from CT is already present in the shadows of their imagination. For example, I recently counseled with a 45-year-old female

social worker. She sought counseling just to learn about her herself. I told her that we could do that yet she would be better served by a more specific goal. In reply, she wanted to consider a job change because she wanted to be more of an advocate than a cog in the machine. Of course what developed through counseling was clarifying her story and gathering momentum to do just that. She was frustrated by how clients were treated by a bureaucratic system and wanted to sit outside the bureaucracy as an advocate for those who were ignored or mistreated by the system. Implicitly, she knew the transition that she wanted to pursue and her project for counseling. Counseling only helped her acknowledge what she already knew.

As a second example, consider the client who said "I want to find out why I get depressed when I enter the science building." The answer is obvious to the reader; the client did not want to be in the science building. The implicit goal of counseling for the client was to find a way to stay out of the science building. However as Einstein was reported to once observe, the thinking that gets us into a problem is the not type of thinking that will get us out of the problem. In CT, counselors believe that the story that got this student into the science building will not allow him to stay out of the building. Depression is just a temporary way of avoiding the building. He needs a new story and that became the counseling project. Also reverberating in the shadows is a story of life outside the science building. According to Abraham Lincoln's maxim, "A goal properly set is halfway achieved" (Ziglar 1997, p. 37). Thus, practitioners begin counseling by learning what a client wishes to accomplish through the consultation.

Client's Project

As clients respond to this agenda setting inquiry, counselors listen for the project that clients will have to complete to reach their stated goals. CT counselors anticipate that the goal-directed project that most clients bring to counseling involves adapting to some change in circumstances or self. In working with high school and college students, the counselor typically listens for the *developmental task* that confronts the client in the form of a social expectations based on chronological age. Developmental tasks and customary transitions such as graduating from a training program, may be anticipated. Developmental tasks are usually viewed as positive changes or advances, despite the challenges involved. In comparison to students, employed adults seek counseling to cope with unexpected and unwanted changes such as the sudden loss of a job. Some clients seek career counseling because they need to cope with a work trauma such as an occupational injury that needs rehabilitation or harassment or bullying that need ending. Whether perceived as positive or negative, the changes prompted by tasks, transitions, and traumas may acutely disorient individuals from their accustomed view of the work and their place in it and thereby produce confusion and conflict. Occasionally, adults seek career counseling with a project prompted by yearning for a personal transformation in the form of a new challenge or change of scenery. The CT uses the generic term *adaptation*