



IAEVG – Restructuring Careers Over Unexpected Powerful Forces

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Creating a research agenda of volition in career counseling

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OUTLINE

- ❑ Why **motivation** construct is not enough for XXIe century career counselling theory and practice?
- ❑ Paucity of research on **volition** construct in **emotional, narrative, and intentionality** processes.
- ❑ Promising **volitional** models for a research agenda in career counseling domain: **Personality Systems Interaction (PSI) Theory** and **Implementation intentions (IMIs)**.



- In general, many clients have pervasive decision-making difficulties when facing the challenge of career choice or transition.
- The current rapidly changing occupational structure and the detrimental context of the economic crises of our globalized late modern society dramatically add a factor of braking **motivation** necessary to career development.



- More than ever, career construction appears to be “characterized by the need to self-motivate, cope with uncertainty, and continue one’s efforts” (Kanfer, Wanberg, & Kantrowitz 2001).
- **Motivation** pertains to the *whys* one strives towards certain goals.
- **Motivation**: only the half of the story that doesn’t guarantee the initiation and pursuit of actions toward a goal in general (cf. Gollwitzer & Sheeran 2006), a goal of managing a career and its sub-goals in particular.



■ In a period of unemployment and poverty, **volition** has to be brought into play to overcome external and internal obstacles to a confident and peaceful reflection on one's career development (*Broonen 2015*).

■ **Volition**: “Human capacity to regulate other psychological functions such as motivation, emotion, and cognition in order to reach challenging goals” (*Forstmeier & Rüdgel 2008, p. 66*). In particular, conscious or implicit strategies used in the formation, maintenance, and implementation of goals (mental representations of desired outcomes) and intentions (mental representations of to-be-enacted behaviors) (*cf. Heckhausen 2007*).



■ Following the lens of Action Theory, 3 aspects of action received insufficient empirical attention in the career literature and in career counseling research (*cf. Young & Domene 2010*):

1. Emotion

2. Narrative

3. Intentionality



1. Emotion

”Emotion is not the sugar coating on the cake of action (...) It is the fabric of action” (*Valach, Young, & Domene 2015, p.183*).

- “It would be informative to unpack how emotion can promote the life-enhancing career, both at the level of meaning and the level of functional steps” (*Young & Domene 2010; cf. Valach, Young, & Domene 2015*), particularly what can be identified as negatively valenced emotions.



2. Narrative, i.e. construct[ing] (...) a story that portrays (...) career and life with coherence and continuity (*Savickas et al. 2009, p. 245*).

“Narrative does not lie solely at the level of meaning of human action, but it involves the cognitions and affect that steer action and the behaviors that constitute it “ (*Young & Domene 2010, p. 6*).

➤ What are the **self-regulated conditions** of constructing personal story?



3. Intentionality “as being able to ‘articulate intentions (...) about self in the future’ ” (*Richardson et al. 2009, p. 246*).

➤ How are intentions related to planning?

Format of plans to be developed not questioned in terms of an action control theory, that is, in terms of the mechanisms of action self-regulation by which the individual effectively copes with problems of **initiating actions**, **persevering** in the face of obstacles, **shielding reaching** the goal from distractions, and **withdrawing** from inappropriate means.



■ Two conceptual and empirical frameworks as solid bases for a research agenda to meet these challenges:

A. Personality Systems interaction (PSI) Theory

B. Rubicon Model with Implementation intentions (IMIs)



A. PSI theory (*Kuhl, 1984; 2000; Kuhl & Beckmann 1994; Kuhl & Koole 2003*)

- Why does « good » decision-making not suffice?
- A theory of **self-regulation** focusing on *functional relationships* among affective and cognitive macrosystems (not as other theories focusing primarily on cognitive or emotional *contents*).
- **Volition** : A set of central executive processes, which regulate the person's thoughts, feelings, and actions in a top-down manner.



I. Self-control (or Goal-maintenance)

Responsible for inhibiting impulsive actions and maintaining a single minded focus on goals that are activated in memory.

II. Self-regulation stricto sensu (or Self-maintenance)

Directs the person's functioning towards activities either intrinsically appealing or congruent with a multitude of the person's inner values and autobiographical experiences.

Self-control (the « will) (Goal-maintenance) L-H

Intention Memory (IM)
Maintaining explicit
intentions, shielding planning.
Sequential, analytical, conscious,
verbal processing

Self-regulation *stricto sensu* (Self-maintenance) R-H

Extension Memory (EM)
Self (motives, values, ...).
Holistic, parallel, largely
unconscious processing

Object Recognition (OR)
Discrepancy-sensitive attention

Intuitive Behavior Control
(IBC)
Intuitive behavioral routines

Self-control *stricto sensu* competence

“Inner dictatorship” (= classical “will power”) (Kuhl 2000)

Self-regulation
competence

“Inner democracy”

Goal recollection
Forgetfulness prevention
Planning skill
Impulse control
Initiating control

(Positive) Self-regulation
Emotion regulation
Self-activation
Self-relaxation
Decision regulation
Coping with failure

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Self-regulation *stricto sensu* competences

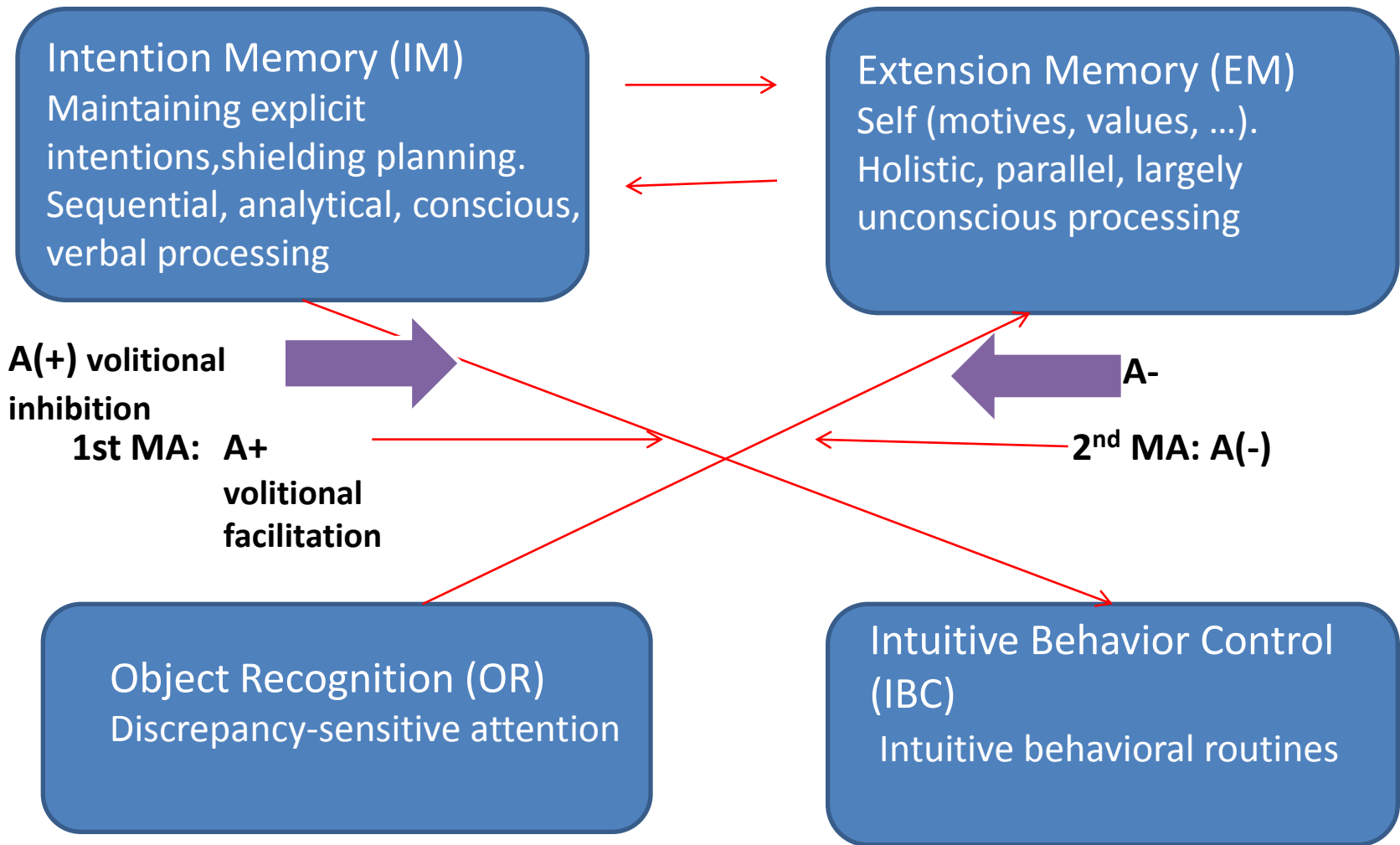
“Inner democracy” (Kuhl 2000)

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(Positive) Self-motivation,
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**Self-control (the « will»
(Goal-maintenance) L-H**

**Self-regulation *stricto sensu*
(Self-maintenance) R-H**



N.B.: Thin (red) arrows: inhibitory relationships between systems; thick (green) arrows: facilitating relationships. A+=positive affect; A- = negative affect; A(-) = reduction of A-; A(+)= inhibition of A+ (simplified schema)

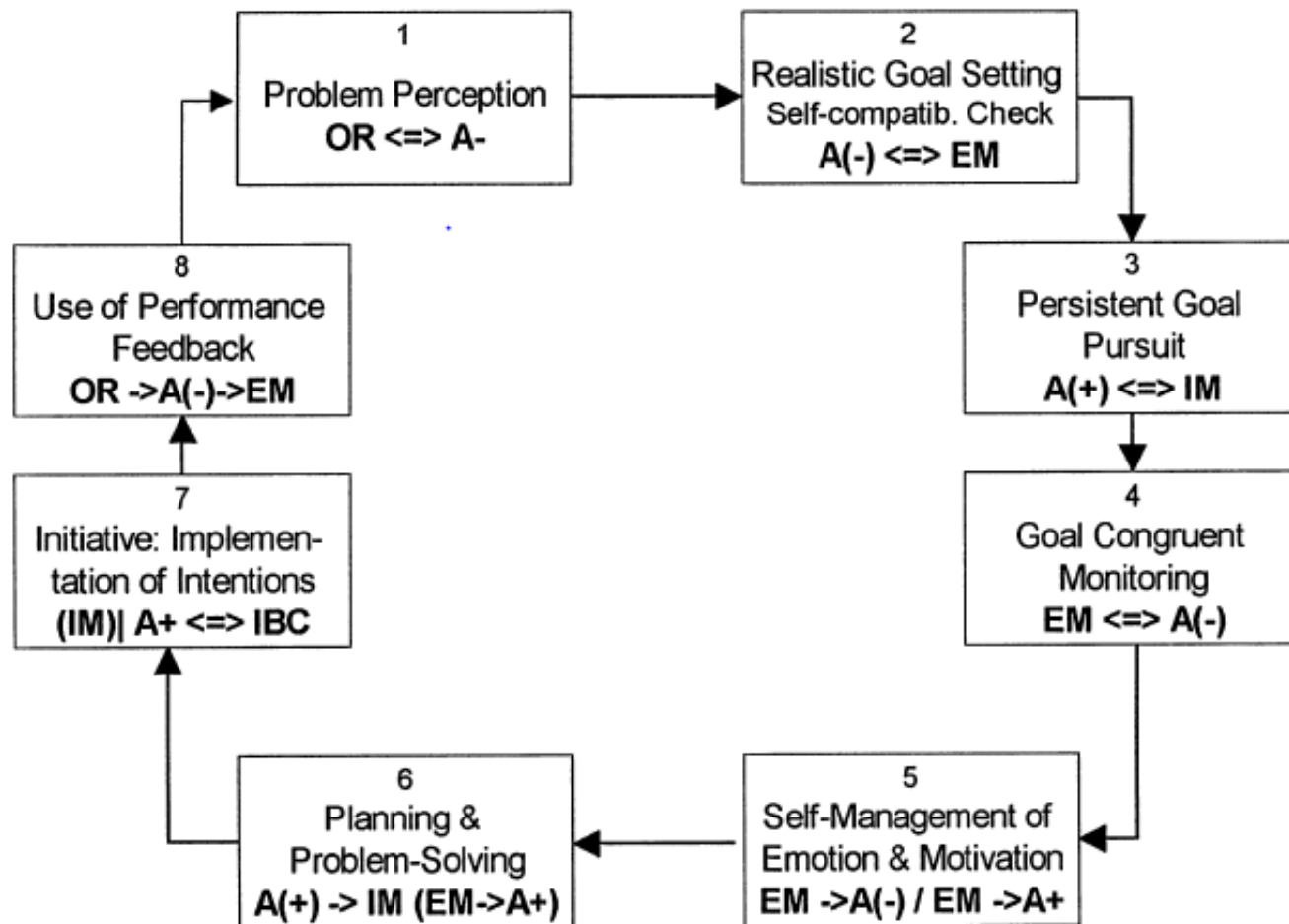


Fig. 3. Conative cycle. Sequence of 8 motivational and volitional phases and cognitive-affective systems (Fig. 1) activated during each phase (EM = extension memory; IM = intention memory; IBC = intuitive behavior control; OR = discrepancy-sensitive object recognition; A + = positive affect; A - = negative affect; A (-) = downregulation of negative affect; A (+) inhibition of positive affect).

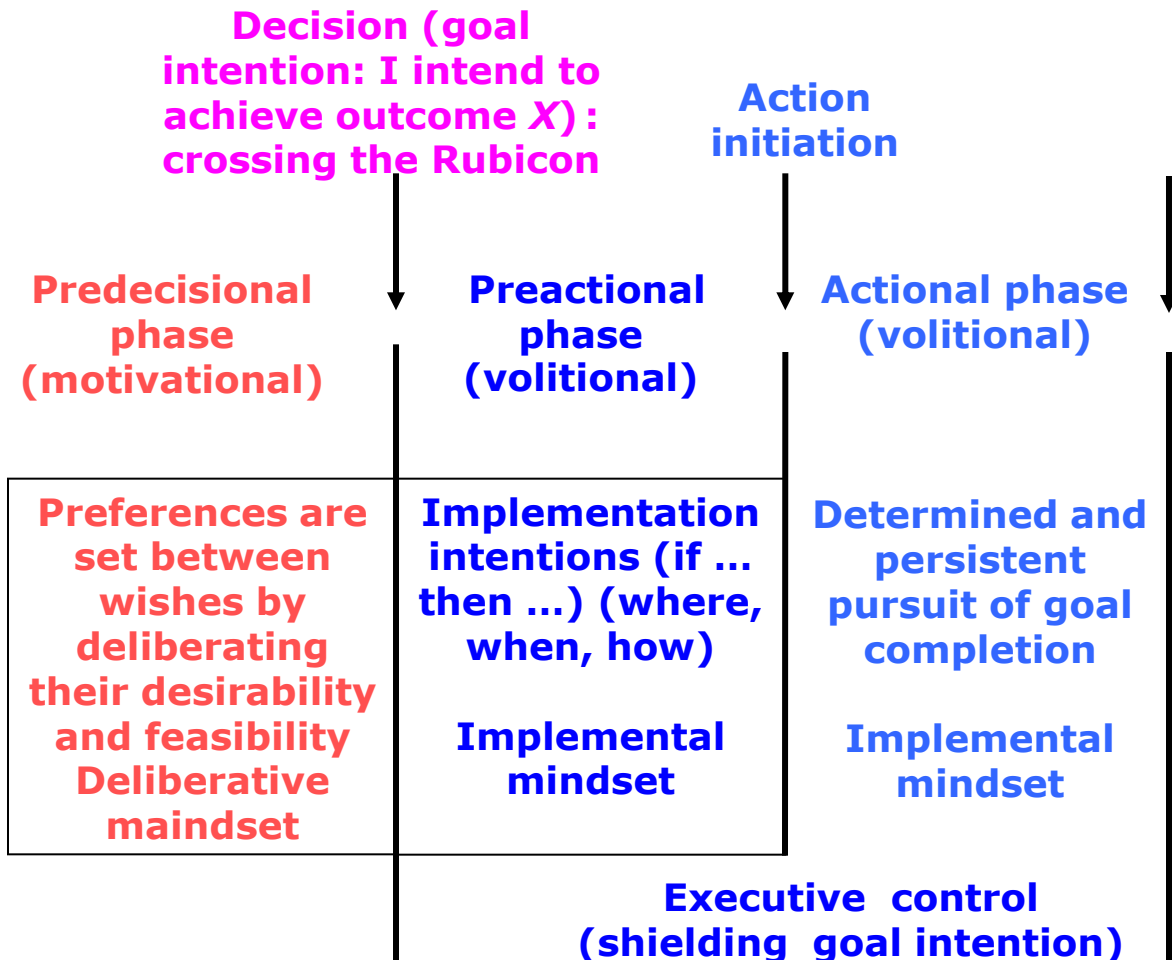


B. Rubicon Model (*Heckhausen & Gollwitzer, 1987*)

- ❑ Substantial gap between intentions and action: people have often to struggle to implement their intended courses of actions (*Webb & Sheeran 2006; Webb, Schweiger, Gallo et al. 2012*).

- ❑ 2 distinct stages in goal reaching:
 - **Goal setting – motivational** – : deliberative mindset = orientation toward an accurate analysis of feasibility-related information.
 - **Goal striving – volitional** – : implemental mindset = orientation toward a self-serving analysis of information.

Action Phases Rubicon Model (Gollwitzer 1996; Heckhausen & Gollwitzer 1987)





▪ **How to alleviate obstacles after crossing the Rubicon in order to transform goal-intention into action?**

Implementation intentions (IMIs): fashioning specific plans of format ' **If** (when) I encounter **situation Y**, **then** I will initiate goal-directed behavior **X** ') that spell out **when**, **where** and **how** to implement goal-directed behaviors.

Effects of **IMIs** documented in promoting wanted behavior and controlling unwanted behavior in various domains (*cf. Achtziger & Gollwitzer 2008*).



➤ Two documented kinds of effects of IMIs in various domains: promoting wanted behavior and controlling unwanted behavior (*cf. Achziger & Gollwitzer 2008*).



□ Specific research agenda of PSI applications to career counseling

1. Emotion

Empirical data are needed about effects on initiating career-goal directed exploration behaviors when career counseling is focused on facilitating affective change to create a short “window of opportunity” (*Kuhl 2008*) during which both hemispheres are activated to approximately the same medium degree and are thus able to exchange information.

State-oriented (S-O) subjects

Preventing volitional self-regulation (*lato sensu*) mode from change; inability to exit from an unwanted state of affect; tendency to ruminative thoughts about a past aversive experience or alternative goals or affective states

Failure-related form

I. Preoccupation: perseveration in thoughts associated with irrelevant concerns

II. Hesitation-related : in front of demanding conditions difficulty of initiating goal-directed action

Action-oriented (A-O) subjects

Change-enhancing volitional self-regulation (*lato sensu*) mode promoting change and prone to dedicate, through flexible regulation of emotions and motivation, cognitive resources to task execution and goal attainment

Decision-related form

Disengagement from cognitions about undesirable events

Initiative-related : easily initiation of actions on the route to a goal (Kuhl, 1981, 1994)



➤ We can and must initiate studies on the impact of Action-/State orientation on the emotional flow of the client in career counseling (ACS scale; Kuhl 1994; cf. Kaschel & Kuhl 2004).



2. Narrative

PSI Theory : a useful theoretical and psychometric (Volitional Components Questionnaire; *cf. Forstmeier & Rüddel 2008; Kuhl & Furmann 1998*) resource to initiate studies devoted to unpack how emotions strongly involved in the construction process of the “story” facilitates access to EM and serve to maintain the narrative construction of the client’s next scenario in her life.



3. Intentionality: Specific research agenda of IMIs application to career counseling

- Turning intentions into actions: a crucial point in a period when altering prior career projects is a consequence of the economic recession, which, in turn, activates many resistances.
- Which applications of IMIs to vocational settings?



➤ Helping people to consciously form specific **IMIs** during counseling when facing career indecision (difficulties in executing means-end strategies to reach a career goal: finding more information on courses, programs ...) to enhance corresponding executive behaviors.



➤ Testing the link between the formation of **collaborative IMIs** (involving two individuals in the planning) and the joint actions engaged by several participants in counseling to explore possible futures seen as bringing one of them closer to their goals (*cf. Young & Valach 2004*).

➤ Research criteria inspired by the Action-Project Method (*Young & Domene 2010; Young et al. 2001*).



Conclusion

- ❑ Difficulties of commitment to concrete action choice for undertaking choosing a job will not decrease in the near future with a correlative lowering of motivation and raising of emotional barriers.
- ❑ Research that tests the impact of **volition** on career behaviors should retain the attention of scholars in the field.



□ Grounded on action control theory developed in **PSI Theory** and **IMIs** model, this paper tried to offer a way of gaining knowledge in our field by framing a research agenda for the introduction of **volition** in some cardinal career counseling processes, namely emotion, narrative, and intentionality, that are sometimes ignored or dismissed as too difficult to access.

Thank you for your attention !
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