**Life
Design and Career Counseling: Building Hope
and Resilience**

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# *Career counseling: hope is not enough, volition is needed*

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# ❑ INTRODUCTION

➢ People find a difficult task to answer clearly what they want to do because of cognitive or emotional obstacles: uncertainty, ambivalence perplexity, inconsistency,... (Chen, 2006).

➢ Detrimental context of the economic crises of our globalized late modernity society: a new factor of braking of motivation, (e.g., hope).

➢ Motivation in the foreground of career choice processes topic either before any help seeking by people or during career counseling.

➢ Motivation is a problematic construct in the career intentional processes.

➢ Goal-setting and goal-striving considered as important in decision making process (Bargh, Gollwitzer, & Oettingen, 2010).

➢ But motivation does NOT guarantee the initiation and pursuit of actions toward the goal of managing a career and subgoals such as career exploration, self-exploration, and environmental exploration.

❑ **Motivation** **in career theories**

➢ What drives motivation (term used by social psychologists "to describe why a person in a given situation selects one response over another or makes a given response with great energetization or frequency ", Bargh et al., 2010, p. 268) in career decision making is **dispersed** in vocational research: needs, interests, work values, work-role salience, future time perspective, goals, or **hope,** cf. Juntunen & Wettersten (2006), adapting Snyder's (2000) theory: " a positive motivational state that is directed at work and work-related goals and is composed of the presence of work-related goals and both the agency and the pathways for achieving those goals" (p.97).

➢ **Goals** or **intentions** (**agency**, cf. Bandura, 1997, 2001) as central constructs in vocational theoretical conceptualizations or empirical researches:

  ✓ Social cognitive career theory (Lent et al.,1994)
  ✓ Contextual action theory of career (Young & Valach, 2000)
  ✓ Career construction theory (Savickas, 2001)
  ✓ Social/personal constructionist and relational understanding of intentional states (Richardson, 2004)
  ✓ Processes of elaboration of vocational intentions (Dumora, 2004)
  ✓ Dynamic model of career choice development (Van Esbroeck et al.,2005)
  ✓ Life-designing paradigm (Savickas et al., 2009).

## ❑ **Coming back to Volition**

➢ In vocational models, turning goal into action is taken into account and even considered as a crucial moment ("Through action, not verbal expressions of decidedness, clients engage the world" Savickas, 2013, p. 168). However, no specific structural and functional fine grain conceptual development is made.

➢ John Locke (1695/1971) :

   "*We find in ourselves a power to begin or forbear, continue or end several actions of our minds, and motions of our bodies, barely by a thought or preference of the mind ordering, or as it were commanding, the doing or not doing such or such a particular action. (…) The actual exercise of that power, by directing any particular action, or its forbearance, is that which we call volition or willing*" (II, xxi, 5).

➢ Lewin and Associates' (1944) distinction of <span style="color:red">goal setting</span> (expectancy-value) vs. <span style="color:blue">goal striving</span> or <span style="color:blue">volition (*Wille*)</span>: form of motivation involved in regulating of how people try to arrive at their goals (theory of tension systems).

➢ Ach (1935): the degree of intensity in the formation of an <span style="color:blue">intention</span> (will) determined the degree of <span style="color:blue">commitment</span>, process independent of the motivational basis of intention.

➢ Ideas forgotten during the behaviorist period, until the way of German *Willenpsychologie* was reopened toward a modern action-oriented volition psychology by Kuhl (1983, 1984, 1985), Heckhausen (Heckhausen, 1987; Heckhausen & Kuhl, 1985), and Gollwitzer (Gollwitzer, 1990; Heckhausen & Gollwitzer, 1987) (see Kuhl & Beckmann, 1985, and Broonen, 2007).

➢ See also papers published in the *American Psychologist* about the question of volition as a possible object of an empirical science (e.g., Hershberger, 1987; Howard & Conway, 1986; Staats, 1987).

# ❑ **Kuhl conceptualization of volition**

Kuhl (and Heckhausen): opposed to expectation-value theories as self-sufficient theories of action because they adopt a hedonistic conception of intention assuming that people do what they want the most to do: confusion between motivation (desire to do something) and intention (to be in a state of commitment to a specific action).

✓ An individual may commit to an intended action, whereas a stronger motivational tendency would push in another direction.

✓ An individual may have positive attitudes and intentions directed toward a goal, but still lack the volitional competences to transform intentions in behaviors.

✓A **function** of volition (or *action control* or *self-regulation lato sensu)*: to increase the motivational basis of an intention (or action plan held in an active state (by contrast with a goal or intended *outcomes*).

✓Action control original theory (Kuhl & Beckmann, 1994): processes facilitating the enactment of intended actions are activated to shield "difficult" intentions (i.e., that the person cannot or should not implement without delay and require an important amount of motivational energy or effort ) in memory from other competing tendencies: attention control, motivation control, emotion control, and environment control.

✓ Control mechanisms modulated by a **state orientation** versus **action orientation variable** (Kuhl, 1981, 1994a; Kuhl & Beckmann, 1994): an individual differential variable of volitional self-regulation mode of action which may explain why two individuals sharing **similar** goals, abilities, and desire to achieve a good performance nevertheless **do not attain the same level of performance.**

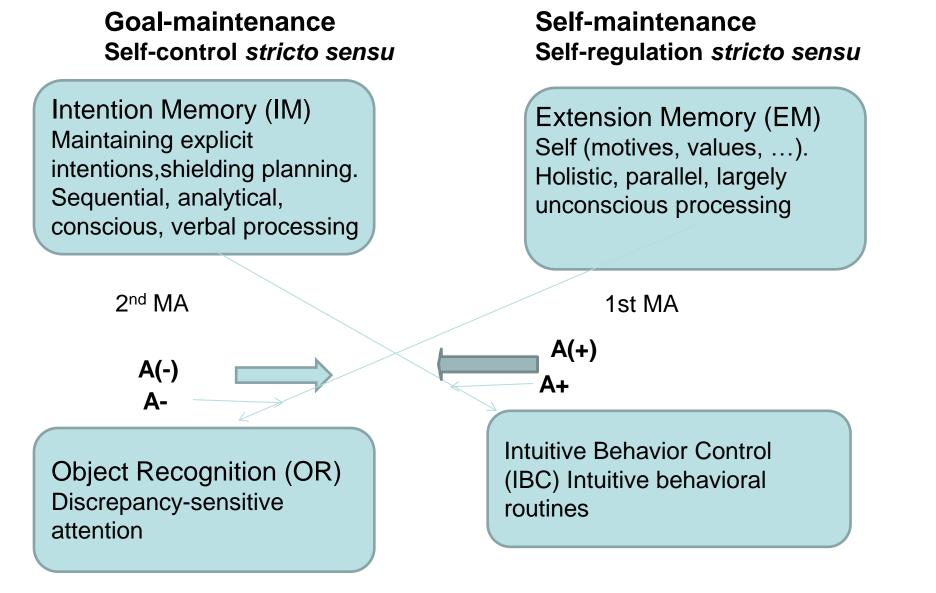| State-oriented subjects | Action-oriented subjects |
|---|---|
| Preventing volitional self-regulation (*lato sensu*) mode from change; inability to exit from an unwanted state of affect; tendency to ruminative thoughts about a past aversive experience or alternative goals or affective states. | Change-enhancing 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. |
| ***Failure-related***<br>*I. Preoccupation:* perseveration in thoughts associated with irrelevant concerns.<br>*II. Hesitation-related* : in front of demanding conditions difficulty of initiating goal-directed action. | ***Decision-related***<br>*Disengagement* from cognitions about undesirable events.<br><br>*Initiative-related* : easily initiation of actions on the route to a goal. |

**Personality Systems Interactions theory** (PSI; Kuhl, 2000a, 2000b)

1. To which degree explicit goal orientations and actions correspond with implicit motive dispositions?

2. Through which functional mechanisms goals (or intentions) are, or not, implemented in behavior (Kuhl, 2008)?
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**Goal-maintenance**
**Self-control *stricto sensu***

**Self-maintenance**
**Self-regulation *stricto sensu***

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

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

2nd MA

1st MA

**A(+)**

**A(-)**
**A-**

**A+**

**Object Recognition (OR)**
Discrepancy-sensitive attention

**Intuitive Behavior Control (IBC)** Intuitive behavioral routines

N.B.: Thin arrows: inhibitory relationships between systems; thick arrows: facilitating relationships. A+=positive affect; A− = negative affect; A(−) = reduction/downregulation of A−; A(+) = inhibition of A+ (cf. Kuhl, 2000a, 2008). [14]

| Self-control *stricto sensu* competence | Self-regulation *stricto sensu* competences |
|---|---|
| **"Inner dictatorship" (= classical "will power") (Kuhl, 2000)** | **"Inner democracy" (Kuhl, 2000)**<br>**(Short Form of the Volitional Components Questionnaire Forstmeier & Rüddel, 2008)** |
| Goal recollection<br>Forgetfulness prevention<br>Planning skill<br>Impulse control<br>Initiating control | Self-motivation,<br>Emotion regulation<br>Self-activation<br>Self-relaxation<br>Decision regulation<br>Coping with failure |

❑ **Implications of Kuhl's PSI theory for vocational psychology practice and research**

➢ Considering the differential cognitive self-regulation variable (action versus state orientation) in career counseling near personality.

➢ Adapting the hypothetical cycle of conative (i.e., motivational and volitional) steps that Kuhl (2000a) modeled to ensure academic success in learning situations.

✓  **Step 1 : problem recognition**
E.g., the end of secondary school and transition to job market or entering a college requires some sensitivity to negative affect **(A-)** facilitating perception of the discrepancy between the EM and the OR systems.

✓ **Step 2: change from A- to A(-)** which involves setting a realistic goal and checking the compatibility between this goal and self-standards: access to EM is facilitated by downregulation of negative affect [**A(-)**] (**2ⁿᵈ Modulation Assumption**); matching a possible goal with self-aspects (own needs or values, norms, and others' expectations) may result in self-compatibility (e.g., choosing psychology studies), which launches an implicit self-motivation motion.

✓ **Step 3**: **change from A(-) to A(+).** Anticipation of a precise succession of vocational choices is not always immediately possible, nor anticipated assurance of successful academic performance (uncertainty): translation of contents from EM to IM at the condition of volitional inhibition of positive affect [**A(+)**] (**1st Modulation Assumption**) (tolerance to frustration).

✓ **Step 4:  self-monitoring;** e.g., low self-efficacy (e.g., belief of not being capable to become a good counselor) or a fear of not maintaining sufficient motivation during studies, sources of anxiety (**A-**). Process tied to the function of vigilance, propriety of the EM whose access is facilitated by downregulation of negative affect [**A(-)**].

✓ **Step 5: self-management of motivation and emotion**; control of self-confidence or self-motivation (e.g., by reminding the pre-eminence of the goal).

➢Toward a cross-fertilization between PSI theory and, for instance, Young, Valach, and Domene's (2005) analyses relying on qualitative action-project methodology and selecting as an important question the ways of enegetization of action and recovering emotional barriers in the vocational domain (Valach & Young, 2009).

## ❑ **Conclusion**

If motivation – hope in particular – is not the last step before action toward a vocational goal in prosperous historical periods, volition is *a fortiori* needed in times of crisis.