

# The relational agency of career guidance and counsellors

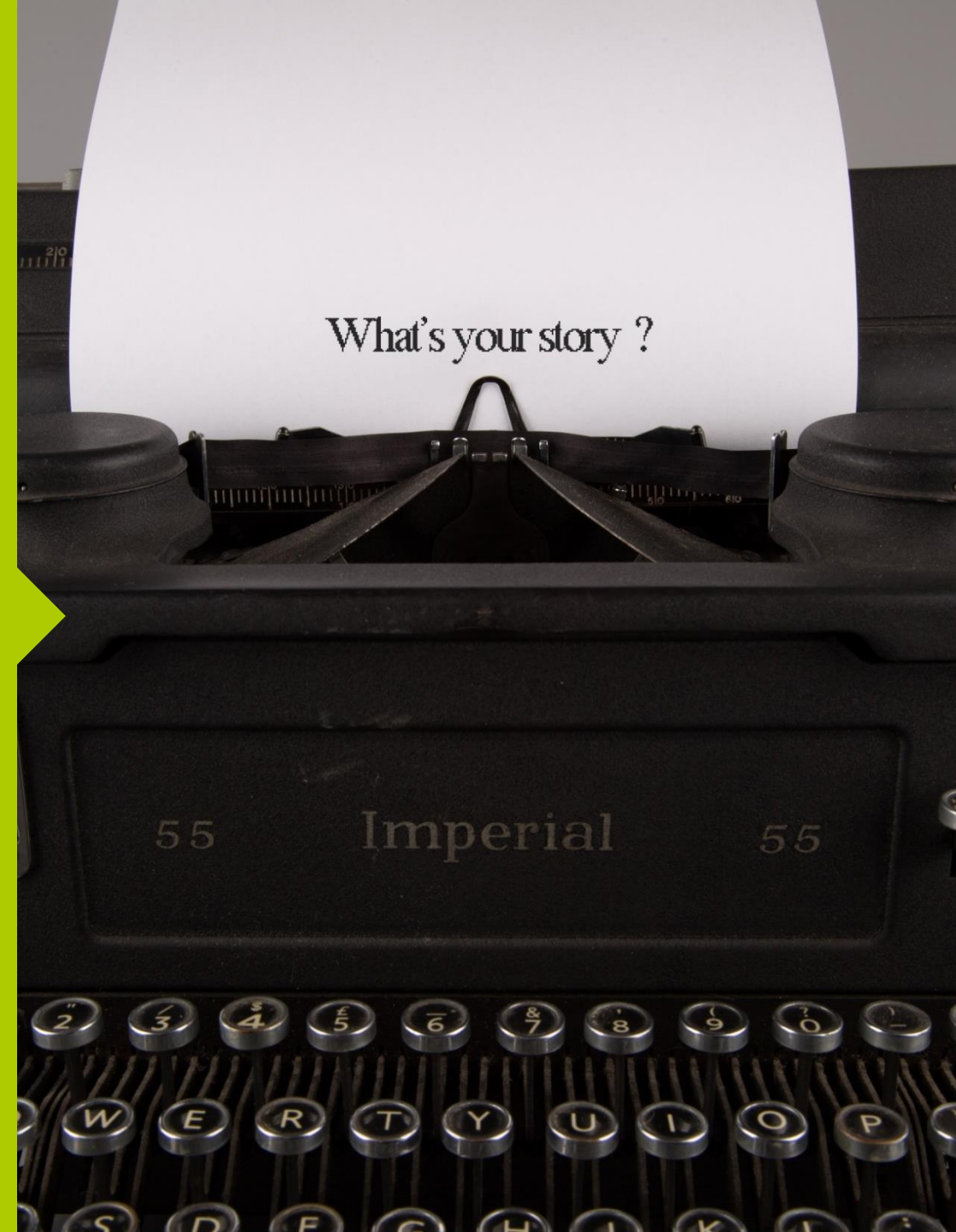
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# GUIDE (Governance and politics of career guidance)

- The overall aim is to contribute to advancements in social science by evolving a new institutional theory on the governance of career guidance, founding on analysis of the continuity and change of institutions' governing career guidance and in their interrelationships.
- *New institutional theory*: what role the institutions have in the formation of social and political outcomes of career guidance systems?
- *Sociological and discursive institutionalism*: 'logic of appropriateness' and interpretations



# Bounding agency in career guidance

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Inter-ethnic Relations and Bounding Agency: The Social Space of Study Guidance and Counselling

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## Abstract<sup>1</sup>

European countries are being urged to reform their education systems to enhance the integration of migrant populations. In many respects, migrant-origin pupils still lack equal educational opportunities in Finland despite the targeted practices and support. This article concerns the inter-ethnic interaction taking place in study guidance and counselling in the final year of Finnish comprehensive school. It poses a question 'how do young people construct their educational identities in classroom interactions in a multi-ethnic class?' The mixed methods research setting offers two sets of data: selective observation (two ethnographic and life-span interviews (n = 8)). The outcomes portray how young people in ethnic school classes open opportunities and supportive bridges for the pupils to contact other ethnicities. Nevertheless, the inter-ethnic interaction was also layered with societal hierarchies and constructed and bounded pupils' ethnic and educational identities. Finally, the article emphasises the opportunities that the local school offers to the schools.

*Keywords:* inter-ethnic relations, study guidance and counselling, bounded agency, educational transitions.

Article

## On the Pathway to an Unforeseeable Future: An Actantial Analysis of Career Designs of Young People

Mira Kalalahti<sup>1</sup>  and Janne Varjo<sup>2</sup> 

### Abstract

The process of life design in contemporary adolescence is of increasing interest in times of lifelong learning and the knowledge society. The aim of this article was to increase the comprehension of career designs by analysing the two-phase interviews of 31 young people at the ages of 15 and 18. Drawing on actantial analysis, we modelled the plurality of the career designs, analysed who the main actors are in those career designs, and how young people express, exercise, and adjust their designs. We conclude that both the subjects and the objects of the young people's career designs included multiple actors. People, issues, and circumstances are integral components of the narratives on the career designs of young people. These components bound their agency and are integrated with their orientations to education and work.

### Keywords

Actantial analysis, agency, career designs, opportunity structure, secondary education

### Introduction: Adjusting Career Designs

The premise of this article lies in the biographical narratives of urban Finnish youths. The teasing questions of the article are 'do young people recognize and adjust to a

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## Diversified transitions and educational equality?

Negotiating the transitions of young people with immigrant backgrounds and/or special educational needs

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### ABSTRACT

The focus of this contribution is on the *targeted transition practices* of career guidance and on the *opportunity structures* they frame for young people with immigrant backgrounds and/or special educational needs. By analysing curricular documents and interviews with representatives from the local education authorities, such as administrators, principals, guidance counsellors and special education teachers (n = 16), we aim to examine critically the options provided for these groups of young people. We conclude that targeted transition practices do not recognise enough the heterogeneity of young people, and can therefore be limitative and exclusive.

**Keywords:** educational transitions, career counselling and guidance, opportunity structure, immigrant background, special educational needs

# The local career guidance policies and the relational expertise of career guidance

- The aim is to model the career guidance policies and networks with the analytical focus on the relational expertise and professionalism of career guidance.
- The aim is to analyse the career guidance cooperation and seek to acknowledge and unravel the boundaries and crossings of the relational expertise within them.



# Relational agency

- One's capacity to align one's thought and action with those of others in order to interpret the problems of practice and to respond to these interpretations. (Edwards 2005)
- Individuals as 'interactants' (Burkitt 2016)
- Shared agency and professional negotiations (Melasniemi & Husu 2019)



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# Problematizations and questions

- The general aim is to portray the engagement and construction of authority and ownership of career guidance.
- The research question is “how the relational expertise of career guidance and counselling is articulated within different institutional positions”.



# Data

- Two case municipalities
- 36 thematic interviews
- Counsellors, administrative staff, principals, social workers and youth study professionals
- Interview themes were a) the institution and position of the expertise, b) career guidance network and cooperation c) the governance of career guidance, d) counselling with the counsellee, and e) aims and future prospects of career guidance.



# Grounded Theory

- Aims to generate theory that is grounded in the data.
- Here the aim is to generate a conceptual model of the relational expertise of the guidance by looking at the expressions of the *agency* ('the capacity of individuals to act independently')





Able to share aims with the training officers

## Open coding (case 'applied sciences')

Group work supporting studying works cross-sectorially and flexibly

Narrow concept of 'work' dominates the field

Project work for 'caring' unites the pupils, psychologists and counsellors

Business co-operation is at the 'gray zone'

Curricula changes are time consuming

Projects overrule the 'traditional' labour relations

Development / research co-ordinator steer the co-work (resource allocation)

Labour relations are based on personal contacts

Student organisation organizes the **tutor** programme



Quality assurance narrows the guidance

Guidance profession is personal-historically transformative

Co-work with **tutors** set the shared aims

Superior controls the statistics for the resource allocation

Information not easily transmitted cross-sectorially

Top-down standardisation conflicts with the subject's history

Institutional histories (institutes) steer the models of co-operation

# Axial coding (case 'applied science')

Narrow definition of work and career bounds labour relations

Shared agency within the institution (study planning, tutoring, student welfare)

Project-based development work enhance sharing the expertise and aiming towards shared understanding



Tensions between the project-based development work and the basic work

Labour relations are shapeless

Imperative of efficiency

Stagnating and supporting historical threads (personal work histories, institutional histories)

# Selective coding

How the relational expertise of career guidance and counselling is articulated within different institutional positions?

Guidance is bounded by historical threads, imperative of efficiency and project-based development work.



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**thank  
you!**