



SOCIETY FOR DESCRIPTIVE PSYCHOLOGY ANNUAL CONFERENCE

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A DESCRIPTIVE PSYCHOLOGY PERSPECTIVE ON CAREERS

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Thank you!

- Descriptive Psychology Scholars
- Clarke J. Stone
- SDP Interviewees

Presentation Topics

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Inspiration for this report.

02

Decision to Study careers in Retrospect.

03

Dr. Pete Ossorio as an example of Lifework.

04

Examining Lifework from a DP Perspective.

05

Exploring Careers of DP Practitioners.

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The Significance of Fulfilling one's Lifework.

Inspiration for this Report

- Zoom and phone conversations during the pandemic with Dr. Keith Davis, Dorothy Davis, Dr. Jane Littmann, Dr. Laurie Bergner and Dr. Reginaldo Garcia.
- Inspired to explore the professional career processes of Descriptive Psychologists who are now at the late middle or end stages of their careers.



What is a career?

“It calls for comprehensive and integrated explanations that will reflect a holistic process of human growth, i.e. a portrait of how individuals make sense, construct and enhance their vocational life in the current world of work.”

(Charles Chen, 1998. “Convergence of Perspectives on Career Development”)



Core Career Characteristics

“Career in this sense has, among other aspects, three core characteristics showing that it (1) attends and goes across one’s total lifeline, (2) represents a changing process rather than a static state, and (3) calls for the person to become the active agent who constantly builds constructive bridges between oneself and one’s worklife environment.” (Chen, 1998)



Decided to Focus on the Concept of Lifework for DP Practitioners

Lifework:

“the entire or principal work of one’s lifetime.”*

The study of Lifework is itself a Life’s work.

*Merriam-Webster

Peter G. Ossorio exemplified a completed “Lifework”

“*The Behavior of Persons* is the capstone of an extraordinary construction, the summary of a life’s work devoted to a single task.”

“Peter G. Ossorio in his life’s work accomplished a monumental undertaking: he articulated the complex and fundamental conceptual structure known as the Person concept.”

From the Foreword to PGO’s *The Behavior of Persons* by Dr.
Anthony O. Putman

The Privilege of Knowing Pete



Having the good fortune to know and work directly with Pete was personally and professionally transformative. He embodied the qualities of an effective healer and teacher--friendly, kind, respectful, funny, encouraging, and empowering.

He showed us how to relate to clients, consultees, students, and colleagues. With the foundation of Descriptive Psychology and Pete's example, we were inspired to go into the world to contribute in our unique ways. The gratitude and appreciation we feel for his many gifts to us and to the world is boundless.

Descriptive Psychology Provides the Tools for Analysis of Lifework and its many dimensions.

- “A person is defined essentially as a life history. The number of ways that one life history as such can be the same as another or different from it is astronomically large and therefore not directly manageable.”

Peter G. Ossorio

- DP offers the conceptual-notational devices to describe and interrelate the myriad states of affairs, processes and sub-processes needed to illuminate how professional careers actually develop.

Career involves a multitude of Deliberate Actions (PGO)

- “A person is an individual whose history is, paradigmatically, a history of deliberate action in a dramaturgical pattern.”
- “The most distinctive, characteristic, and fundamental patterns of occurrence of behaviors in a life history are patterns which involve a variety of different types of behavior, not just a single type. These patterns include social practices.”
- “In any given community—Social Practices are ‘what there is to do.’”



In DP Terms, Career involves Multiple changes from one State of Affairs to another.

1. A person discovers Social Practices that he/she sees as a genuine expression of self.
2. He/she completes requisite training and experience to participate fully in the set of Social Practices related to his/her profession.
3. This pursuit of an interest/calling is sequential over a many stages.
4. Career Choices are driven by external events as well internal states of affairs.
5. The evolution of a career involves multiple appraisals that the behavioral possibilities of one state of affairs are more desirable than another.

Three Questions about Lifework* for this small study.

1. How did people discover their life's work?
2. What patterns characterize professional endeavors across one's Lifework?
3. What is the significance of working toward or completing one's lifework mission?

** My answers below to these questions are preliminary and represent significant simplifications of complex topics.*

First Step: Create a Tentative PCF of Lifework: LW = F, GL, <SP>, Cs, <SI>, R

F = Foundations The Foundations of Lifework include values for the K, KH, and PC parameters that led to discovering/choosing a particular career path and the formative education, training, mentoring and practical experiences that made a person eligible to participate fully in that role.

GL = Guiding Lights Guiding Lights are values of the W parameter including the aspirations, motivations, professional vision and objectives that serve as “through-lines” influencing career decisions and direction over time.

<SP> = Social Practices Social Practices are a society’s patterns of behavior. In general, the patterns include more than one behavior, and most social practices involve behavior on the part of more than one person. Viewed as a process, social practices have stages, options, contingencies, and eligibilities. This process represents every Version of the social practice.

<Cs> = Communities Lifework is carried on within communities including Governments, Universities, Hospitals, Community Mental Health Centers, Businesses, Courts, Community Practice, Prisons, etc.

<SI> = Social Institutions Social Institutions are “ingredients of organized sets, or structures, of Social Practices. These larger units are “institutions.” In lifework terms, relevant social institutions would include working as an attorney, professor, psychologist, computer scientist, researcher, etc.


R = Realization The total experience of discovering, conducting and fulfilling one’s career mission across lifetime professional endeavors.

Five Lifework Interviews

I interviewed these DP Practitioners using standard questions about each person's career process, motivations and transitions, areas of work, and the influence of Pete and Descriptive Psychology. My interviewees were:

1. Dr. Ian Newby-Clark, Psychology Professor and Department Chair, University of Guelph, Canada
2. Dr. Laurie Bergner, Clinical Psychologist and Consultant, Illinois
3. Dr. David Bender, Clinical Psychologist and Consultant, Tennessee
4. Mr. Clarke J. Stone, University of Minnesota Chemical Engineering Grants Manager, and Author, Editor, and Publisher
5. Dr. Reginaldo Garcia, Clinical Psychologist and Program Director, Alabama and Colorado

Study Question 1: How did people discover their life's work?



Your talents are the compass pointing to your true purpose.

“It’s not possible to save the world by trying to save it. You need to find what is genuinely yours to offer the world before you can make it a better place. Discovering your unique gift to bring to your community is your greatest opportunity and challenge. The offering of that gift—your true self—is the most you can do to love and serve the world. And it is all the world needs.”

(Descriptive Psychologist Dr. Bill Plotkin)



Pathways to Career Choice—Ian Newby-Clark

- “Fundamentally curious about people and why it is they do what they do.
- Interested in majoring in Anthropology, Sociology or Psychology and chose Psychology after studying the Encyclopedia.
- Started out in Artificial Intelligence/Cognitive Science but was more interested in the human side of things than mathematics.
- Fascination with relationship between thinking and behavior and how thinking processes influence innovation and creativity.”

Pathways to Career Choice—Laurie Bergner

- “During Middle and High School I did a lot of writing, poetry, reading—all I could think of was to become a writer. My mother suggested based on how well I interacted with people that I do a report on Psychiatry.
- This led to work several summers as an aide in psychiatric hospitals, then the fourth year switched to Albert Einstein community based unit—I’ve always been community oriented as an important place to make a difference.
- During college I realized I was not interested in Medical School, advisor suggested Clinical Psychology and although I wasn’t really interested in research decided to move forward and found my home in this career.”

Pathways to Career Choice—David Bender

- “Interested in calculus and engineering HS, started college as a math major, then transitioned to biology, chemistry and psychology. Friend suggested advanced psychology degree.
- Curious about people and different perspectives—taught Job Corps with inner city youth and Appalachian kids. Started a Master’s program at Cal San Jose and had a work study placement in Palo Alto. Quite disappointed in Psychology—Ray Carlson introduced me to Descriptive Psychology—absolutely transformational.
- Arranged to meet Pete in Denver while I was travelling back to University of Tennessee to finish my graduate work. My life has never been the same since.”

Pathways to Career Choice—

Clarke J. Stone

- “I came from a very verbal family and love writing and editing—both fiction and non-fiction.
- Broad background in Physics and Mathematics and was a voracious reader in physical and social sciences. Ran a publishing house for ten years and learned to manage and coordinate complex projects.
- Writing was something I could do and people paid me to do it—then branched out to work for private scientific companies, got temporary writing/editing work at the University of Minnesota, and things went from there.
- I recognized DP as sorely needed social mathematics.”



Pathways to Career Choice— Reginaldo Garcia

- “I was very blessed with the community where I grew up in Southwest Colorado, my parents, and undergraduate and graduate mentors all encouraged me and recognized my abilities. Meeting Dr. Ossorio fully restored my hope and interest in Psychology.
- People confided in me and trusted me—I was naturally given to study and observe people and ask about them.
- A major personal influence was an uncle who was a very talented artist, and one of the most kind and loving people I have ever known. In his honor and memory I became a clinical psychologist.”

Study Question 2: What patterns characterize professional endeavors during one's Lifework?

Dramaturgical Patterns

Through-Lines

Intentional Action Description Parameters

Social Practices in Communities

Social Institutions



Lifework is Part of a “Dramaturgical Pattern” (PGO)

“The Dramaturgical pattern is based on the model of a social practice. It’s an episode. And that’s what human life consists of, this kind of episode. The discussion of self-concept depended on that, that you live your life not just engaged in this Deliberate Action followed by another one followed by another one.

What you’re living is meaningful patterns of Deliberate Actions. And the *closest approximation* we have is a social practice. So that’s what I mean by a dramaturgical pattern. You have to have that kind of history, not just a history of Deliberate Action.”

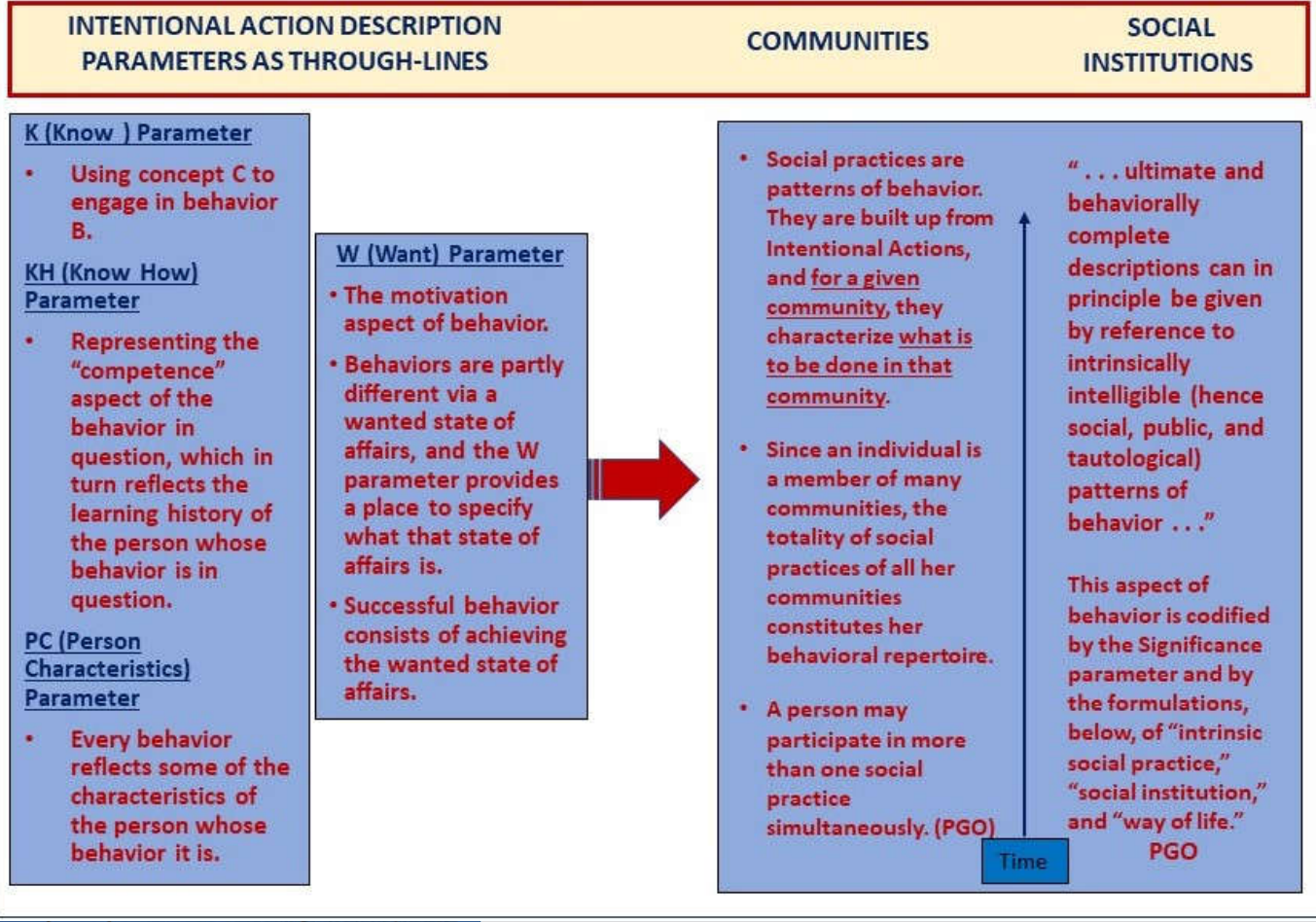
Through-Lines* in Lifework

“What a person finds significant organizes their selection of behavior. Implementation rests on recognized opportunity and competence. Implementation is the performance.” (Dr. Wynn Schwartz)

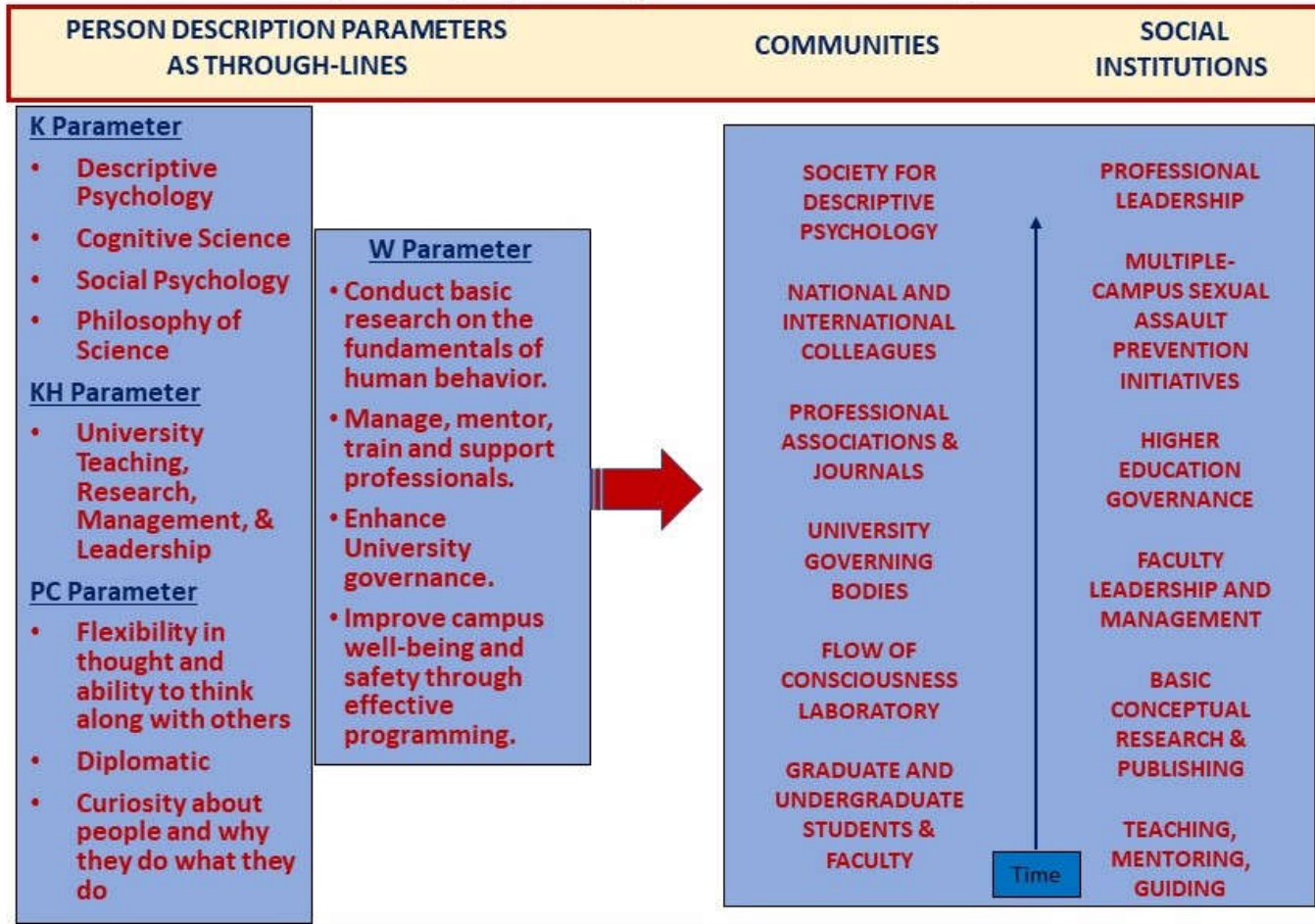
“Through-lines serve as a manageable unit for identifying significant and recurring themes in a life history.” (Schwartz)

* “A **through-line** is a connecting theme or plot used in media such as films and books. It is sometimes also called the 'spine', and was first suggested by Konstantin Stanislavski as a simplified way for actors to think about characterization.” Wikipedia

Characterizing the Multiplicity of Intentional Actions During Lifework



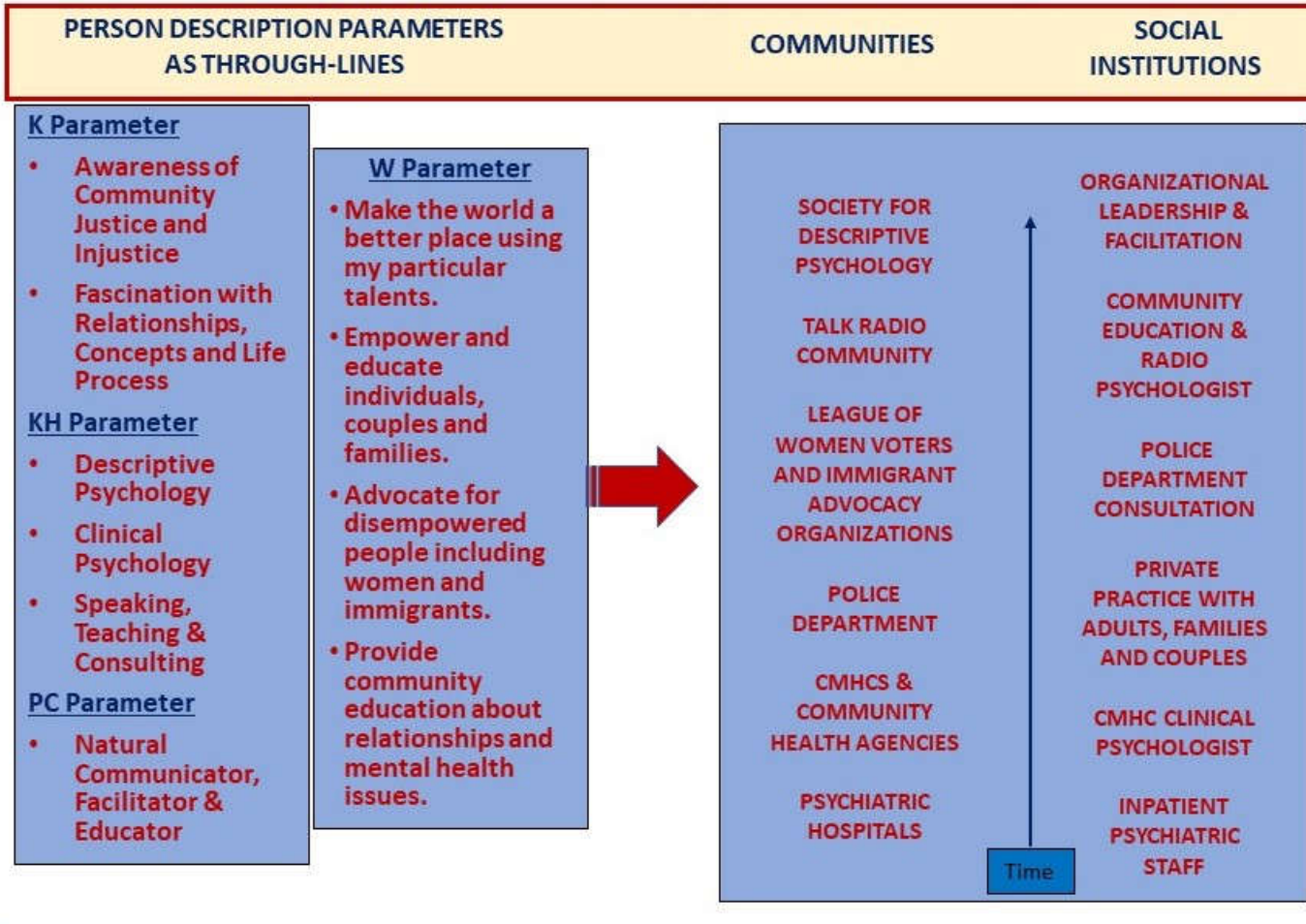
Dr. Ian Newby-Clark, Psychology Professor and Department Chair



Dr. Ian Newby-Clark Lifework

Dr. Newby-Clark creates comfort and safety through offering kind attention, careful listening, deep interest in people and ideas, and respectful communication. These attributes led naturally to becoming a valued teacher, mentor and ally for students and colleagues, conducting basic research on ordinary thinking processes, serving as psychology departmental chairperson, developing multiple enhancements in university governance, and multi-university innovations in sexual assault prevention.

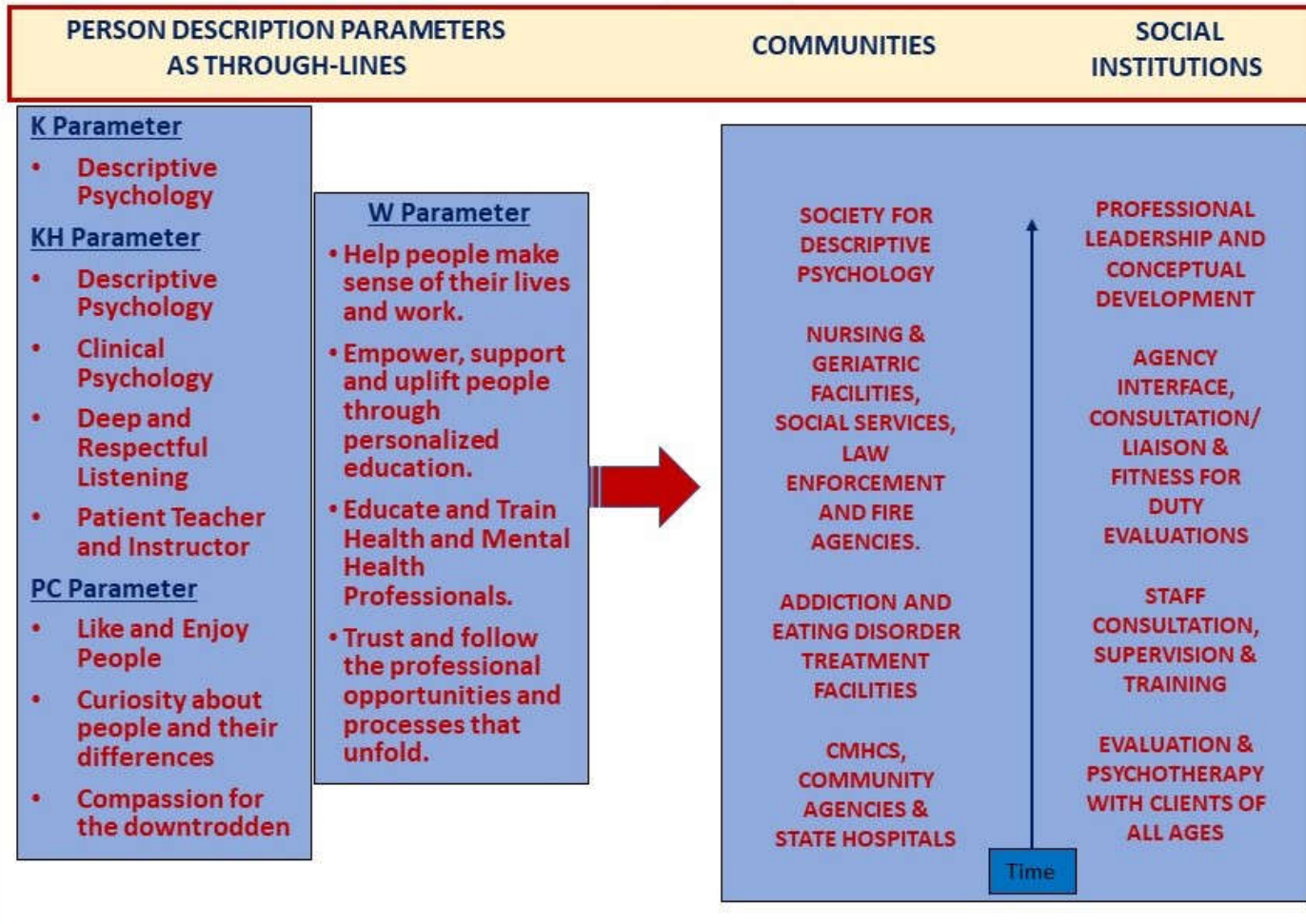
Dr. Laurie Bergner, Clinical Psychologist and Community Advocate



Dr. Laurie Bergner Lifework

Dr. Bergner's warmth and openness naturally inspire communication ease and cooperation from others. She pursued her deep interest in and knowledge of people and relationships to become a specialist in working with couples and intimate relationships. Her ability to create community within groups make her a natural leader, consultant and community educator, able to teach and inspire both small and large audiences, including her work as a 'radio psychologist.'

Dr. David Bender, Clinical Psychologist and Consultant



Dr. David Bender Lifework

Dr. Bender approaches others with welcoming humility, kindness and a unique capacity for deep and careful listening. His compassion, idealism and passion for empowering people through explaining “what actually happens” led him to provide psychotherapy and supervision to clients and colleagues in range of community settings. Additionally, he offered teaching and consultation to law-enforcement, health and elder care facilities, enabling others to spread his healing presence and knowledge.

Clarke J. Stone, Professional Author, Publisher and Grants Manager

PERSON DESCRIPTION PARAMETERS AS THROUGH-LINES

COMMUNITIES

SOCIAL INSTITUTIONS

K Parameter

- Recognized DP as Urgently Needed Social Mathematics
- Physics
- Mathematics

KH Parameter

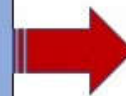
- Mastery of Extremely Complex Material
- Professional Writing and Editing
- Desktop Publishing
- Film and TV Production

PC Parameter

- Broad Reading and Interests
- Well-Organized

W Parameter

- Help people say what they mean to say.
- Achieve clear and logical elucidation of intellectual concepts and ideas.
- Design proposals to meet precise and complex specifications.
- Master multiple modalities of communication and entertainment.



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 COMPANIES

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 BUSINESS
 COMMUNITIES

 FICTION AND
 NON-FICTION
 AUTHORS

CONCEPTUALIZE,
 CATALOGUE AND
 INDEX COMPLEX
 INTELLECTUAL
 MATERIAL

 UNIVERSITY
 DEPARTMENTAL
 COORDINATION
 AND PROPOSAL
 AND GRANTS
 MANAGEMENT

 TECHNICAL
 WRITING &
 EDITING

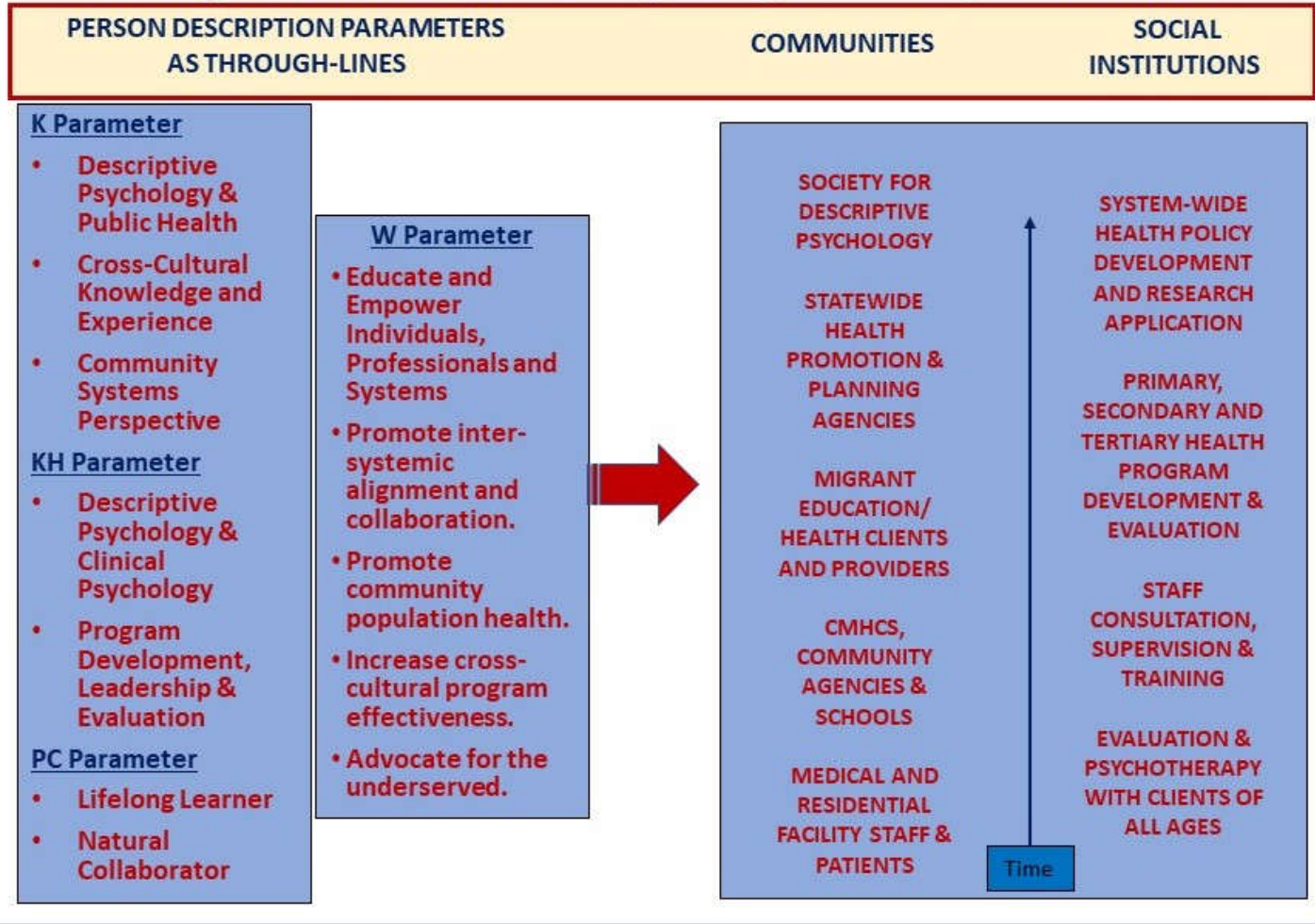
 ENTREPRENEURIAL
 WRITING,
 EDITING,
 PRODUCING &
 MANAGING

Time

Mr. Clarke J. Stone Lifework

Clarke J. Stone's deep interest in writing, words, language and ideas began early in life, and continues through his life's work creating, editing and publishing, fiction, non-fiction and scientific publications. A wide reader, his training in physics and mathematics prepared him to "help others say what they mean to say" in regard to complex scientific topics. C.J. recognized Descriptive Psychology as the urgently needed "social mathematics" allowing precise descriptions of persons and their behavior. His indexed definitions of DP concepts are an enduring contribution to the field.

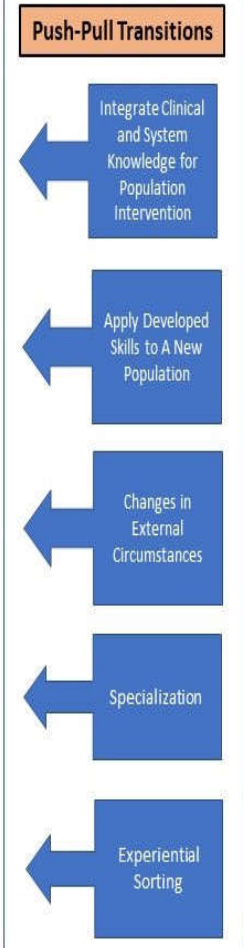
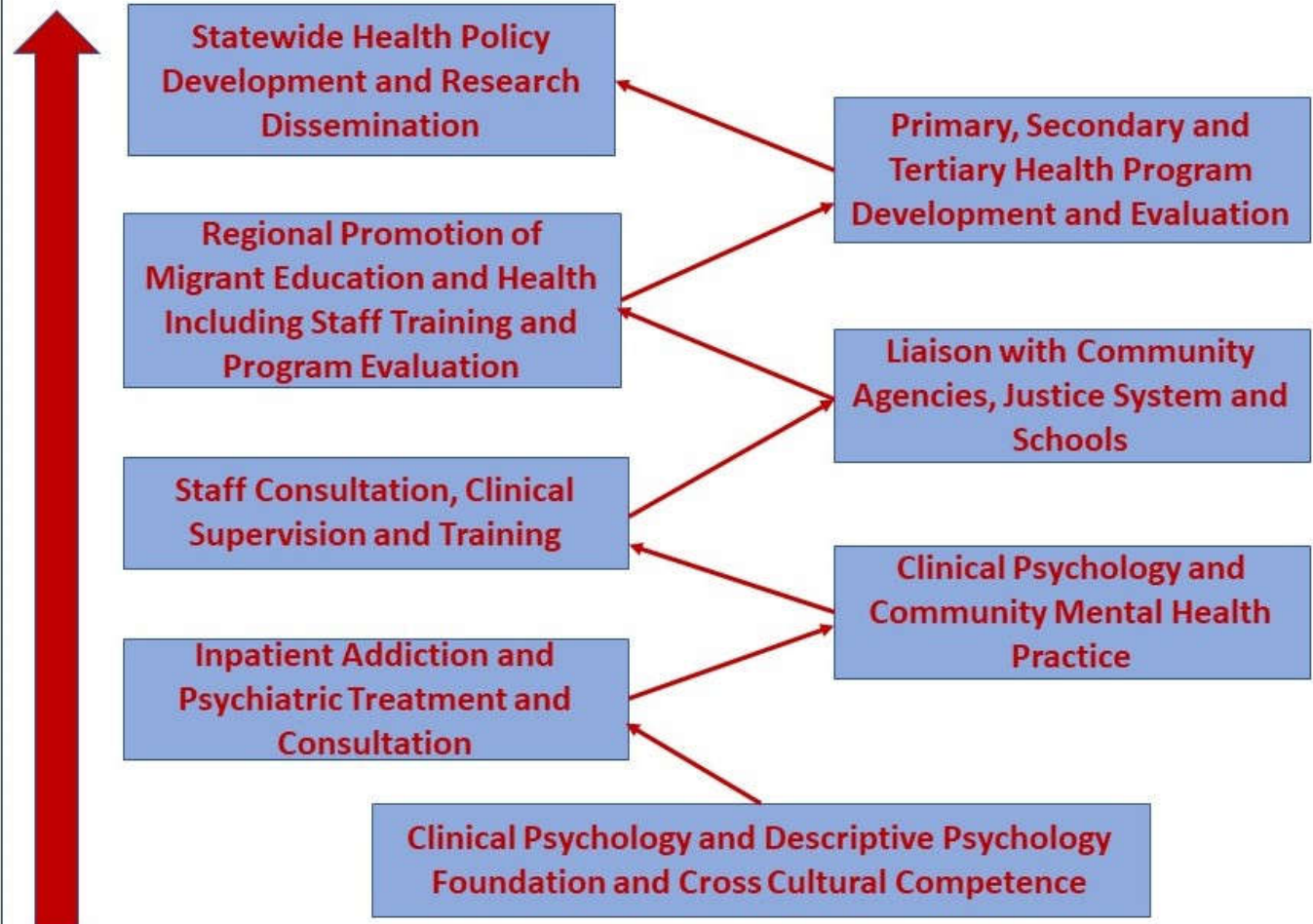
Dr. Reginaldo Garcia, Clinical Psychologist and Program Director



Dr. Reginaldo Garcia Lifework

Dr. Garcia's deep gratitude for the guidance and gifts from family and community and sense of service led him to pursue lifelong professional training and education. In honor of his Southern Colorado rural and cultural roots, he has devoted his career to treatment, healing and education to meet the needs of the communities that inspired him. His natural collegiality and diplomacy enabled him to develop, implement and evaluate comprehensive migrant education and health programming in alignment with Statewide health and education initiatives and to leave a lasting legacy.

Dr. Reginaldo Garcia Lifework Career Evolution Lattice



Study Question 3: What is the significance of working toward or completing one's lifework mission?

Significance (Ossorio, The Behavior of Persons)

“This parameter codifies the ‘meaningful’ and/or ‘ulterior’ aspects of behavior. In general, behavior has a multilevel structure involving (a) the behavior which is ‘what the person is up to’ or ‘what the person’s really doing’ and (b) one or more ‘implementation’ behaviors, which is what observation reports of behavior generally describe.”

Interviewees' descriptors of the experience while Conducting and/or Realizing their “Lifework”

Challenging

Inspiring

Humbling

Fortunate

Grateful

Cooperative

Eager

Invigorating

Fascinating

Transformative

Innovative

Focused

Joyful

Rewarded

Conducting Lifework as “Eudaimonia”

A life of meaning and purpose.

“Eudaimonia is defined as a life that is centrally focused on activities that are constitutive (worthy and meaningful in themselves, and consistent with one’s values, commitments, and self-identity), with instrumental activities (a means to an end) having a secondary role.”

Blaine Fowers, *Journal of Theoretical and Philosophical Psychology*, 32, 1-9. (quoted in Huta and Waterman)

Lifework as Fulfilling One's Virtuous Potentials

“. . . well-being is not so much an outcome or end state as it is a process of fulfilling one's daimon or true nature—that is, of fulfilling one's virtuous potentials and living as one was inherently intended to live.”

Deci, Huta, and Ryan (2008)

SUMMARY



A multitude of dimensions of careers.



This study Focused briefly on the dimension of Lifework.



Applied DP conceptual tools for analysis of Lifework



Retrospective summaries of several SDP member's Lifework.



Eudaimonia characterizes the personal realization of Lifework.

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