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Career and working life: An investigation of metaphor usage in online promotional videos of Australian and Norwegian universities

Analysis of metaphoric language offers a means to explore self and identity as well as a framework for theorising career and working life; such analysis is currently emerging within the field of vocational psychology for the study of career, work, and organisational dynamics. Indeed, metaphoric themes are recognised as fundamental to understanding the notion career (Inkson, 2004; Mignot, 2000; Super, 1957, 1980), meaningfulness in the workforce (Lengelle, Meijiers, & Hughes, 2016; Savickas, 2011), and organisational behaviour more broadly (Cornelissen, Oswick, Christensen, & Phillips, 2008; El-Sawad, 2005; Morgan, 2006). For instance, the classical developmental theory of career by Super conceptualised career as a vehicle or lifelong path. More recently, Inkson proposed nine metaphors for career, including a cycle, a resource, and a story. In communication with others, metaphors form fuzzy categorical clusters of expectations and associations accessed in culturally and socially situated contexts of discourse. Our investigation analyses online videos of Australian and Norwegian university students talking about education, career, and working life, created to promote career-related benefits of higher education. We apply the Metaphor Identification Procedure Vrije Universitat (MIPVU) (Steen et al., 2010) to the English transcriptions and an adapted Scandinavian version of MIPVU to the Norwegian transcriptions to gain reliable, quantifiable and comparable results concerning the metaphor used by these students to discuss their careers

as students and as college graduates. The aims are twofold: first, to compare the metaphors identified in these videos with those previously established by scholars of vocational psychology; and second, to perform a cross-cultural comparison between the promotional uses of metaphor in these different university contexts and languages. Furthermore, we argue that metaphors offer an interpretive repertoire to facilitate the coherent transfer of interrelated physiological, emotional, and cognitive dimensions. This work represents an innovative methodological advance for research into career and working life.

Key words: career; education; metaphor; MIPVU; cross-cultural; vocational psychology

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