Career Style Interview: A Contextualized Approach to Career Counseling

Brian J. Taber
Paul J. Hartung
Hande Briddick
William C. Briddick
Mark C. Rehfuss

Clarification of a client's self-concept and its implementation in the world of work remains an overarching goal of career counseling. To date, counselors have largely used objective measures of interests, values, needs, and abilities in their efforts to accomplish this goal. Objective assessments alone offer decontextualized views of the self, often disregarding nuances in individual differences. To address this problem, counselors can use the Career Style Interview (CSI), which forms the assessment as a method for attaining a more comprehensive and personally meaningful representation of the self. A description of the CSI and a case study are presented to promote counselor understanding of this method.

Choosing and entering an occupation essentially involves a process of clarifying and implementing a work self-concept (Super, 1951, 1953). This proposition remains a mainstay of career counseling, dating to the inception of the field (Parsons, 1909). Consistent with this premise, a variety of psychometric inventories and scales have been developed and used by career counselors to facilitate and expedite the process of self-understanding. Objective appraisal of vocational interests, needs, values, and abilities through test interpretation has indeed become common practice in career counseling (Crites, 1981; Crites & Taber, 2002; Swanson & D'Achiardi, 2005; Watkins, Campbell, & Nieberding, 1994). Measuring individual differences is the central component of trait and factor models of career counseling.

Assessing broad, decontextualized dispositional traits, such as interests, needs, values, and abilities, reflects basic tendencies in behavior. These behavioral tendencies can be conceptualized as the structural basis of individual differences (Cantor, 1990; McAdams & Pals, 2006). Results from objective measures merely provide career counselors with a general outline of a person's individuality and self-concept. For example,

Brian J. Taber, Department of Counseling, Oakland University; Paul J. Hartung, Department of Behavioral Sciences, Northeastern Ohio Universities Colleges of Medicine and Pharmacy; Hande Briddick and William C. Briddick, Department of Counseling and Human Resource Development, South Dakota State University; Mark C. Rehfuss, School of Psychology and Counseling, Regent University. *Portions of this article were originally presented during a symposium at the 2007 annual meeting of the National Career Development Association, Seattle, Washington.* *Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Brian J. Taber, Department of Counseling, Oakland University, 440F Pawley Hall, 2200 North Squirrel Road, Rochester, MI 48309-4494 (e-mail: taber@oakland.edu).*

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Holland's (1997) Realistic, Investigative, Artistic, Social, Enterprising, Conventional (RIASEC) typology is widely incorporated in many vocational interest inventories. Typically, career counselors examine the three highest scores on operationally defined RIASEC scales to determine a client's vocational personality. However, although two clients may both resemble SAE types, it is unlikely that both have the same motives, goals, strivings, adaptive strategies, or self-images (Savickas, 1995b). Indeed, people are more than the sum of their scored responses on inventories and tests. Therefore, understanding specific contextualized features of the self-concept elucidates the client's lifestyle and everyday behavior. Therefore, to effectively assist clients with clarifying their self-concept and its implementation in the world of work, career counselors need to understand the uniqueness of the individual and identify specific behaviors that stem from dispositional traits. By adding a contextualized approach to career counseling, a more complete picture of the client develops, thereby becoming more useful and producing a better outcome (Savickas, 1996).

To understand the nuances of individuals and the context in which they construct their lives, we recommend the Career Style Interview (CSI) as a means of facilitating greater self-knowledge. The CSI is a technique that has its roots in Adler's individual psychology (see Savickas, 1989) and is a key component in identifying life themes from a career construction theory perspective (Savickas, 2005). Capitalizing on its Adlerian heritage and its interface with constructivism (Hartung, 2008; Jones, 1995; Savickas, 1995a; Watts & Shulman, 2003), the CSI elicits a co-constructed client narrative that gives meaning to the client's identity and a foundation for purposeful action (McIlveen & Patton, 2007).

The CSI has been refined during the last 20 years (Savickas, 1989, 1998, 2002, 2005) and has been demonstrated in an audiovisual recording (Savickas, 2006). In the current article, we describe the most recent version of the CSI, elaborate on its essential elements, and present a case study to demonstrate its use.

CSI

The CSI (Savickas, 1989, 1998) is used to gather data in the form of self-defining stories from the client about life structure (roles), adaptability strategies, motivations, strivings, and personality style. In the initial interview, the counselor listens carefully for clues about the importance of work relative to life roles in other areas (e.g., study, home and family, community, and leisure). Ascertaining the client's level of work-role salience allows the counselor to determine whether further career assessment and counseling will be meaningful (high career salience) or not (low career salience). Clients who are high in career salience show readiness to benefit from more career assessment. Clients who are low in career salience may, depending on their unique life status, need help either (a) orienting to the world-of-work before further assessment or (b) exploring and preparing for other life roles.

The CSI itself comprises an introductory question that elicits clients' goals for counseling and six primary domains of questions that are used to elicit narratives from clients for comprehending and constructing their life stories. In addition to the opening question, Table 1 lists the

TABLE 1

Career Style Interview Questions

Opening Question

How can I be useful to you in constructing your career?

1. Whom did you admire when you were growing up? Whom would you like to pattern your life after? List three heroes/role models.
   a. What do you admire about each of these role models?
   b. How are you like each of these persons?
   c. How are you different from them?
2. What magazines do you read regularly? What do you like about them? What TV shows do you really enjoy? Why?
3. Tell me about your favorite book/movie.
4. What do you like to do with your free time? What are your hobbies? What do you enjoy about these hobbies?
5. Do you have a favorite saying or motto? Tell me a saying you remember hearing.
6. What were your favorite subjects in junior high and high school? Why? What subjects did you hate? Why?
7. What are your earliest recollections? I am interested in hearing three stories about things you recall happening to you when you were between 3 and 6 years old.

seven core questions counselors use to frame a CSI. These core questions deal with role models, preferred social environments, manifest interests, preferred work environments, life story designations, and central preoccupations. Table 2 explains what the elicited responses in each domain of questions reveal about the client. As the client relates self-defining stories in the form of responses to the questions in the CSI, the counselor listens intently, asks clarifying questions, makes reflective statements, and records the responses for use in interpretation and as a summary for the client to retain. Questions about role models reveal the client's ego ideals, indicate a central life goal, and provide viable solutions to the client's core life problem. Magazines and television shows indicate preferred environments that fit the client's style. Books reveal a major character who faces the same problem as the client and shows how that character dealt successfully with the problem. Leisure activities deal with self-expression and reveal manifest interests. A favorite saying provides a title to the life story. School subjects indicate preferred work

TABLE 2

Career Style Interview Domains

Domain	Explanation
Role models	Represent ego ideals. The focus of inquiry is on what is admired rather than who is admired.
Magazines/TV shows	Indicate preferred environments that fit the individual's style.
Favorite books/movies	Reveal a major character that faces the same problem as the individual and show how that character dealt with the problem.
Leisure and hobbies	Deal with self-expression and reveal manifest interests.
Favorite saying	Provides a title to the life story.
School subjects	Indicate preferred job tasks and work environments.
Early recollections	Reveal preoccupations that guide personal strivings.

environments. Early recollections reveal central interests or preoccupations that guide personal strivings. Next, we discuss each of these elements.

Role Models

Individuals enter the world with no instruction manual about how life should be lived. Thus, children look to others to provide them with a way of finding solutions to problems they encounter as they grow up. Individuals whom children admire become role models. In many respects, role models provide a template for designing a life (Erikson, 1968). The models selected represent someone who shares a dilemma that is similar to one's own and who has figured out a way to resolve the issue. By imitating role models, people develop and rehearse relevant coping attitudes and form values and interests for certain activities. Consequently, skills develop through engagement in these activities. Understanding why individuals choose particular role models provides a window into their view of an ideal self and their central life goal. Indeed, as people talk about their role models, they are really talking about themselves (Savickas, 1989, 1998).

Frequently, people turn to more than one role model as they construct their identity. Typically, individuals incorporate personally salient aspects from different role models with respect to such features as interests, attitudes, capabilities, and values and then synthesize those aspects into a meaningful whole (Flum, 2001; Gibson, 2004). Therefore, the initial question in the CSI is focused on eliciting three role models whom the client admired as a child, preferably before the age of 10 years, a time when children are curious about life and how it should be lived (Erikson, 1963). Selected role models can come from anywhere: cartoons, super heroes, a renowned person, or someone from the neighborhood in which an individual grew up. In short, role models can be real or fictitious, famous, or relatively unknown. Role models may originate from a variety of sources but the one thing they all have in common is that they were purposefully selected to provide a path to follow in creating a life. Clients are encouraged to look outside the home and family when discussing role models because parents and immediate family members are a presence in the child's life, not a choice.

After a client has identified at least three role models, the next step is to clarify what is admired about these individuals and in what ways they are similar and dissimilar to the client. Follow-up questions reflect a focus on ascertaining which traits, values, skills, and other pertinent characteristics the client saw in these individuals. It is important to note that the counselor must be careful not to impose her or his view on what these role models are like. Rather, it is the client's perceptions that are at the center of exploration. Themes and patterns emerge that provide a unified statement of the resources they have available to them as they have adapted to the challenges of living.

The influence of role models often can be found years later. Take, for example, the case of a young man, who as a child admired Cactus Pete, the host of a local children's cartoon program. He stated that he admired Cactus Pete because he seemed to "tune in" and be attentive to the needs of children. This role model held particular importance for him in shaping his life course. As a child, he was prematurely declared dead by a physician, and it was not until a nurse took initiative that he was found to still be alive. Later in life, this young man went on to train medical students and other helping professionals to tune in to what their patients and clients were saying and to be attentive to their needs.

Favorite Magazine and Television Shows

Favorite magazines provide vicarious environments in which people immerse themselves (Savickas, 1989, 1998). In these purposefully selected settings, people nurture interests that fit their personality style. Many magazines incorporate features that are designed to attract an audience with specific interests. Many topical magazines can be conceptualized in terms of the RIASEC typology of person-environment fit theory (Holland, 1997). For example, *O: The Oprah Magazine* and *People* magazine expose readers to predominantly human interest stories and suggest a preference for a Social environment. In contrast, magazines such as *Popular Mechanics* or *Outdoor Life* indicate a preference for a physical or Realistic environment. Therefore, understanding which magazines a client subscribes to and reads consistently provides clues to their most preferred environments. Occasionally, people report that they prefer variety magazines such as *Time*, or prefer reading the Sunday newspaper. In the case of the newspaper preference, asking the client to identify their preferred section or the section that is read first can clarify the preference. The precise reasons for choice of reading material can be revealed through carefully crafted questions regarding what draws the individual to a particular publication. It is not uncommon to see a consistent pattern within a client's choice of magazines. For instance, a client who chooses to read *Travel + Leisure* magazine may also enjoy reading the travel section of *The New York Times.*

Some clients may not be able to recount any magazines that they read consistently. Instead, they may find it easier to identify a number of television shows that they watch on a regular basis. Discussing one's favorite TV shows provide another avenue by which a counselor can assist the client in identifying a preferred environment. It is important to ask questions to tap into specific features of the environment a client finds desirable. For example, a client who describes herself as an avid *Law and Order* fan may be asked "What is it about the show that you are drawn to?" The person may indicate that she or he likes the way a problem that initially seems impossible to figure out is solved by competent individuals who collaborate with each other. This answer may reveal a preference for an Investigative-Social environment. As with other aspects of the CSI, it is important to focus specifically on why the individual has certain preferences with regard to her or his selection.

Favorite Books and Movies

People are frequently drawn to a particular book with a plot that resembles their own dilemma (Savickas, 1989, 1998). The attraction to the book also underlines a certain level of identification with a character. Because the character dealt successfully with a seemingly impossible plight, the admired person in the book might constitute an ego ideal much like a client's role models. Discussing favorite books can be quite empowering for the client who may, for the first time, understand the core problem with clarity. The conversation can be transformative in that the client may come to see himself or herself as an agent who is capable of overcoming difficulties. As is true for books, exploring favorite movies can be a source of meaningful information.

Specific questions can elicit subjective and meaningful information about the client that can be instrumental in moving him or her toward a

more preferred career narrative. For example, "What is the book/movie about?" "Which character in the book/movie did you like or admire the most?" "What are some personal characteristics that you admire in this individual?" "How are you similar or dissimilar to the character?"

To illustrate how a favorite book can resonate in one's work life, consider the case of man who identified a series of mystery books from his childhood that featured a group called The Three Investigators. He noted that he admired the leader of the team, Jupiter Jones, for his ability to use his intelligence and creativity to solve difficult and unusual problems to help others. As an imaginative, verbal child growing up in an environment that perpetuated stereotypical male gender role, the client felt out of place. Jupiter was a memorable character for him and presented an alternative path that brought success. After high school, despite familial expectations to follow a traditional occupational path into coal mining, the client went to college to pursue a profession in the social sciences. As an adult, in a manner similar to Jupiter, the client used his creativity and analytical mind to solve rather abstract and somewhat mysterious problems that were brought to him for consultation.

Leisure and Hobbies

When people are free to be themselves—without the constraints of commitments related to work or other life roles—what do they do with their time? Inquiring about how leisure time is used and related hobbies provides a source of information regarding manifest interests (Crites, 1999). In listening to responses regarding leisure activities, it is important to tune in to the roles that accompany participating in a specific leisure activity. For example, when participating in hobbies, does the individual play the role of listener, learner, competitor, team member, observer, problem solver, or partner? The identified role informs the counselor of the individual's preferred way of interacting with the environment and how he or she is reinforced for participating in selected activities (Savickas, 1989, 1998).

Favorite Sayings

Favorite sayings are often words to live by. People are drawn to certain quotes or sayings on the basis of how well these statements resonate on a personal level. Frequently, these favorite sayings are advice to one's self and may represent a title for an individual's life story. They serve as reminders of things that should be done to live a personally satisfying life. For example, a client's favorite saying "gather ye rose buds while ye may" may serve as a reminder to the individual not to lose focus on the pleasures in life. Other examples include "live and let live"; "if it ain't broke, don't fix it"; "that which does not kill you makes you stronger." Regardless of the saying, what is important is the meaning it has for the particular client and how it fits within the context of the individual's life (Savickas, 1989, 1998).

School Subjects

Asking a client about his or her favorite and least favorite subjects gives the counselor insight into the early experiences of satisfaction and success vis-à-vis grades (Savickas, 1989, 1998). School subjects, like occupations, have relatively distinct requirements. Thus, classrooms in junior high and high school are in effect mini work environments. A public speaking course,

for instance, is different from an art course, which in turn is different from a chemistry course, and so on. Each course in the curriculum provides distinct work settings and specific tasks pertinent to that particular subject. These early work environments provide opportunities for people to explore and cultivate their nascent interests, skills, and work habits. From these early experiences, people gain a sense of what talents they possess and may want to refine. At the same time, they learn about what does not fit their abilities or areas that do not hold interest for them. Therefore, through interacting with the educational environment, people begin to differentiate parts of their self-concept in terms of interests and abilities through multiple interactions in different educational contexts. Reflection on these experiences gives some indication of the client's preferred work environments and associated tasks. Conversely, the counselor can discern the environments and tasks that the client may wish to avoid as he or she considers occupational alternatives.

Asking why a client loved or hated a specific subject or subjects tells the counselor what he or she learned from those experiences that are still salient. For example, a client may state that he or she enjoyed math courses because math provides a logical set of steps to arrive at an answer. Therefore, what is most important is how the client perceived the tasks associated with the course and how this relates to his or her current preferred work tasks. Although the client may not necessarily desire a math-oriented occupation, the client does enjoy using logical steps to arrive at a solution to a problem, which is a salient characteristic a person brings to his or her work. This same client may say that he or she hated art class because it was unstructured and that there is "no right way" to do art. This gives the counselor further indication of what a person does not want in an occupation.

When inquiring about favorite subjects, it is important to note that the distinction is made between the actual content in those subjects and the teachers who taught those courses. This is particularly relevant in cases where the reported favorite subjects do not seem to fit with the client's overall narrative. A client may report that he or she enjoyed a particular subject because the teacher was humorous, charismatic, a good storyteller, or had some other endearing quality that the client thought was admirable. It should be noted that the Life Career Assessment (Gysbers & Moore, 1987) does elicit responses regarding a client's favorite teacher characteristics that may have some personal relevance to the client. However, even though teachers can be held in high esteem for a number of reasons, the counselor is interested primarily in the content and tasks associated with the school subject that defined the selection.

Early Recollections

Early recollections are the client's reported memories for specific events that happened before the age of 10 years. The reason for focusing on early childhood is that these stories were formed during a time when people define what the world is like and how to fit into it. It is important to bear in mind that these stories center on certain specific events rather than reports of family routines or broad descriptions of early life experiences (Sweeney, 1998). The relevance of early recollections is in their depiction of self-perceptions and the client's worldview as

articulated through the stories (Mosak & Di Pietro, 2006). Therefore, these recollections provide insight into the client's central interests or preoccupations that guide personal strivings (Adler, 1937). These recollections are not causative agents of behavior, rather they are reflections of his or her current life situation and struggles.

During the course of the CSI, the client is asked to relate three stories from his or her childhood to provide a fuller understanding of the client's characteristic way of interacting with the world (Clark, 2002; Mosak, 1958; Savickas, 2005). Out of the thousands of possible events that can be recalled, the client typically selects the three that are most relevant to the current situation (Mosak & Di Pietro, 2006). The focus of exploration is not to determine the historical accuracy of the stories, but rather to understand a person's self-perceptions and patterns of interacting with the world.

As the client relates early recollections, the counselor should write down the exact words used in each story. This is done to capture the essence of the story, which is often found in the words used to describe the events. To clarify the essence of each recollection shared, the client is asked to give a headline to the story as if it were to appear in a newspaper. As is true for newspaper articles, the headline captures the central theme of the story (Shulman & Mosak, 1988). In the headlines and the stories themselves, the counselor should pay close attention to the verbs used by the client to get a sense of the client's preferred style of movement through life. For example, in the recollected story, is the client "running," "wanting," or "hiding?" By focusing on what the client is doing in the story, the counselor can get a sense of the direction of the client's striving, using a well-rehearsed and tested style of action (Ansbacher & Ansbacher, 1956).

To illustrate the relevance of early recollections and career, consider the case of a woman in her mid-30s who is mulling over a possible career change. She shared the following recollection.

> I remember my friend got a new skateboard and I wanted to learn, so I jumped right on and crashed. However, I kept at it and in the end, I was better at it than anyone in our neighborhood.

She gave this story the headline "Strong Woman Perseveres to Victory." The headline clarifies the meaning of the memory and the resources that this woman brought to her current situation. Even though, she was intimidated by her uncertainty regarding what to do with her career, her determination to see the situation through is illustrated in the story that she related. In relating her recollection to her current situation, it could be seen that a career change seemed daunting to her, but she "wants to learn" about her possibilities, and she was willing to "jump right in" and "persevere" even though she might have "crashed" along the way. Inevitably, she knew that she was capable of coming up with a solution to her current dilemma.

CSI: A Case Study

To demonstrate the rudiments and routine of the CSI, consider the story of Emma (a pseudonym), a 23-year-old graduate student who

presented with the career concern of being "kind of stuck" between pursuing law school and becoming a licensed professional counselor. She perceived this situation as stressful and indicated that she did not have much structure or a concrete plan. In the discussion, Emma indicated that her career aspiration was to be a judge or a child advocate. For the CSI, or any counseling intervention, to be effective, it is important for the counselor to establish rapport with the client. In keeping with the spirit of constructivist career counseling, the counselor assumes the role of an interested and curious listener (McMahon & Patton, 2002). Therefore, using results from the interview is supplemented with other pertinent information gathered through interaction with the client. Professionals using the CSI for the first time should seek supervision from someone who is experienced with constructivist approaches to career counseling. Additionally, professionals who are new to this approach should use corroborating information obtained from objective measures and/or the client's history and background when examining the meaning of themes in client responses. The following is a summary of Emma's responses to the CSI.

Three Role Models

- *Aunt Hazel.* Independent, social, successful, open-minded, kind of like a hippie. She never married and couldn't say no. ("I can, easily.")
- *Beth (neighbor).* Caring, loving, can't say no, controlled easily, doesn't speak up.
- *Jim (neighbor).* Breadwinner, threw big parties for friends at work, level-headed, spoke up, saw things as "black and white." ("More gray for me.") "I'm independent, pretty social, easy for me to say no."

Magazines

- *People* (lives of the stars, famous people)
- *Health & Fitness* (articles on how to relieve stress)

Favorite Movie

- *Office Space*: Motivates me not to work in an office; main character asserts himself

Favorite Book

- *Who Moved My Cheese?*—Deals with change and adaptation; quick easy read

Favorite Television Shows

- *Forensic Files*, *Psychic Detectives*, arts and entertainment shows (profiles of people); news, *O'Reilly Factor* (conservative views, people speak their minds)

Hobbies

- Shop, eat, work out, write, talk

Favorite Sayings

- "A true friend stabs you in the front" (be honest, open, tell what you think); "I answer to two people— myself and God."

What were your favorite subjects in school?

- Liked math—Could check your answer, right or wrong; government—teacher was young and funny, told jokes, laid back; disliked astronomy—kicked out of class first day but ended up with two better classes: physics (boring, not useful) and biology (gross)

Three Early Recollections With Headlines

- *Don't Listen to Me . . . and Pay!* (Age 5 years). Waking up and running downstairs; waking up Dad, Dad picking me up, and I tried to tell him not to. I puked all over him. Told him not to but he wouldn't listen. Felt bad.
- *Excited at Dawn* (Age 8 years). Waking up; Mom decorated the house for my birthday. Felt surprised, happy, excited.
- *The Slippery Truth* or *I'm Stronger Than You* (Age 9 years). My (older) sister spilled oil all over the driveway. She blamed me for it. Dad and mom made me sit on the couch until I 'fessed up. I never 'fessed up. Felt pissed off, stubborn. Thought, "Why me?"

Interpreting the Data

With the counselor having listened for clues about life structure and elicited specific stories about career adaptability, life themes, and personality style, counseling then moves to interpreting the data in a narrative form that "reconstructs the client's character with greater agency and self-consciousness" (Savickas, 2002, p. 190). This process involves analyzing the client's responses to the CSI. The interpretation process moves systematically through a seven-step process (Savickas, 2005) that attends, in turn, to the client's (a) opening statement to identify counseling goals; (b) early recollections to recognize the preoccupation and core problem that constitute the life theme; (c) favorite sayings to elaborate on the life theme and the immediate problem the client wishes to deal with in counseling; (d) first early recollection and role models to connect the core problem to potential solutions; (e) role models to comprehend the specific characteristics and qualities the client uses or wishes to use in an attempt to solve the problem; (f) overall stories to reveal areas for growth in terms of the career adaptability strategies of concern control, curiosity, and confidence; and (g) overall stories to indicate vocational personality style according to Holland's (1997) RIASEC types.

The following account represents one counselor's perspective on Emma's stories for the purpose of sketching the career construction process that has been detailed more fully elsewhere (see Savickas, 2002, 2005). As happens in counseling practice, readers will likely attend to varying aspects of the data. Thus, their analyses will lead them to form additional ideas, hypotheses, and conclusions about Emma's story not conveyed herein. The counselor's goal in career construction always concentrates on being useful to the client rather than being wholly precise and correct (Savickas, 2005). The crucial aim for the counselor is to help the client design a desired life structure, adapt to developmental tasks and transitions, comprehend the life theme, and realize his or her vocational personality style and preferred occupational environments.

Emma's Story

Emma's opening statement suggests that her goal for counseling was to develop a plan to become unstuck. She wanted help with structuring her life and making concrete plans that could help her move more successfully and deliberately than perhaps she had done heretofore. As a graduate student with career aspirations, work and student roles appeared to be salient. Her stories also alluded to the importance of home

and family roles along with leisure as part of her life structure. As an emerging adult in her early 20s (Arnett, 2004), Emma was beginning to more fully integrate her self-concept and mesh it with the outer world of society. What she likely wanted was help dealing with this "stressful" life transition that would require her to develop an initial adult life structure. This would allow her to tentatively express her sense of self in a way that was aligned with society's expectations of her.

To connect Emma's story to her career concerns, the counselor examined her early memories to identify the core action and how she moved in the world. The verbs she used (e.g., waking, running, sitting) animated her stories and proposed how she moved in the world. Emma's stories suggest that she ran through life waking up to tell her story, perhaps even waking up each day to see whether the day would bring the excitement of a party or the pain and frustration of others' inattention and attempts to control her. At the time of counseling, she was running to meet the required hours for practicum well in advance of the deadline for the semester. By midterm, she had run so fast that she had accumulated nearly all of the required practicum hours. The counselor discussed with her that it now seemed the right time to begin to slow down to make a more deliberate move, one that she could control.

Emma's stories suggest that she wanted to wake up others, who often did not wake up and listen to her, sometimes until it was too late. Listening to the words she used in stating her career concerns, her feeling of being "kind of" stuck suggested that she felt stuck between these two options, but not really. The bigger problem may have been that she felt stuck without a more concrete "black and white" plan, perhaps like Jim, her role model, would have been, with little gray area. The stuckness really may have been stuck with not knowing how or wanting to take the time to make a plan. Rather than making a concrete, set-in-stone plan, she could construct a more flexible plan with clear components and enough gray area to allow for change when she "woke up" and realized that "somebody had moved her cheese."

Speaking out, being heard, and nurturing and speaking out for others who cannot speak for themselves represented Emma's tenable solutions to her problem. Her heroes, Beth and Aunt Helen, had shown her how to care for others, be independent, and also interdependent and social. Unlike them, Emma did not want to be made to sit on the couch of life being quiet and reserved, feeling stuck, never speaking up and expressing herself. Indeed, she appeared to seek to overcome this problem by speaking up for others who, like her, may have been treated unjustly. Emma may have identified with the perceived suffering this approach might bring and fight against it even to the point of perhaps sometimes speaking up too loudly if she believed it was necessary to prevent being controlled by others. Her concern seemed to have been having control over her own decision making, which may have been reflected in the stress she felt in the form of potential external barriers such as parental pressure. She wanted to care, nurture, and show her independence more actively and proactively, behaviors that were consistent with her Artistic, Social, and Enterprising vocational personality style as indicated from her Self-Directed Search (Holland, 1994) and Strong Interest Inventory results (Donnay, Morris, Schaubhut, & Thompson, 2005).

Rather than sitting quietly "on the couch," just taking it, and waiting out a resolution to her career concern, the counselor suggested that

Emma's next move may best be not to run ahead to get to the end of the story, but to move in a more measured, level-headed way, perhaps taking on the role of a "psychic detective" who methodically pieces the parts of the puzzle together to make a coherent whole and solve the mystery of the next chapter of her life. Knowing her resistance to being controlled easily, it would probably be best if Emma used her independent nature to set the course and write her own story. She must do so being mindful of the patterns that have shaped her life thus far and the ultimate self she would like to construct, perhaps suitable for a future episode of a favorite television show, *A&E Biographies.*

Emma conveyed to the counselor that she did not want to be stuck in an office or in one location. They discussed how she could move between the courtroom, the judge's chambers, and other venues. She also did not have to be stuck with one degree because she could meld counseling with a law degree. Emma and the counselor considered how she could use the counseling degree (without the need to obtain a license) to supplement a law career. Alternatively, she could pursue counselor licensure in concert with or after law school. By obtaining multiple degrees, she could use them in combination to make an even more powerful statement, to speak out more fervently, and to have a stronger voice as her stories suggested she wanted to have.

The counselor discussed with Emma how she might look to professional associations to find a role model who blended counseling with law practice. Judges are elected officials. In this regard, she may need to balance her ability to speak up and assert herself (sometimes too frankly) with political savvy, diplomacy, and negotiation, which she agreed were skills she needed to hone. She could look to her role model Jim for an example of how to live life in a more level-headed, dispassionate way, ultimately blending in her need for excitement (e.g., throwing parties along the way to keep life fun and exhilarating).

Conclusion

In the case of Emma, the CSI elucidated a more comprehensive picture of her current life situation and the direction it should take. Listening to Emma's story allowed the counselor to weave together her unique motives and strivings to arrive at a solution to her career dilemma. In this case, the acceptable solution for Emma's career problem is to become both a counselor and an advocate through law. By acting in accordance with her style, Emma can speak up for others, nurture, and be independent. These themes, which have guided her throughout her life, can now be translated into work.

As illustrated in the previously described case study, the CSI transforms career counseling into a more robust, subjective, therapeutic endeavor to give individual work lives more meaning. Although objective assessment methods that are typically used in career counseling provide an indication of a person's behavioral tendencies, the CSI fills in the gaps, offering a contextualized approach to assisting people to author their life stories. As McAdams (1995) pointed out, an individual's dispositional traits, which are typically ascertained through psychological testing, only provides one perspective of a person. He suggested, instead, that to gain a more

complete picture of the person, consideration must also be given to their adaptive characteristics encompassing such things as motives, strivings, ways of understanding and relating to the world, and other contextualized distinctive qualities. Still another level of understanding comes from the life stories people tell as they create an identity (McAdams, 1995). Indeed, it is the exploration and integration of these three perspectives that provide a means of understanding a person (McAdams, 2001). Accordingly, the CSI provides insight into clients' characteristic adaptations and serves as a stimulus for helping them articulate their vocational identity. Augmenting the venerable matching model with this method affords counselors and clients the opportunity to attain a more complete, meaningful, and personally relevant picture of the client. In so doing, career counselors can become better facilitators of helping clients clarify and implement their self-concept in the world of work.

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