
Impact of the Career Style Interview on Individuals With Career Concerns

Journal of Career Assessment

19(4) 405-419

© The Author(s) 2011

Reprints and permission:

sagepub.com/journalsPermissions.nav

DOI: 10.1177/1069072711409711

http://jca.sagepub.com



Mark C. Reh fuss¹, Jennifer Del Corso², Kevin Galvin³, and Scott Wykes²

Abstract

A total of 18 participants ranging in age from 20 to 55 were administered the career style interview (CSI) and completed a follow-up interview 2 weeks later. Consensual qualitative research analysis of follow-up interview data indicated that after completing the CSI, participants *generally* felt helped and also *typically* experienced awareness, self-confidence, direction, confirmation, and a sense of encouragement related to their career concern. Most participants' occupational narratives demonstrated a change from pre-CSI to post-CSI, moving toward more specification. Participants primarily recalled role models as the most meaningful aspect of the CSI, and integration of Holland code typology within the CSI produced higher rates of recall than previous studies. This study addresses implications of these findings for theory, practice, and research.

Keywords

career style interview, counseling outcomes, narrative, qualitative, career intervention, career assessment

Due to rapid technological advances and the globalization of economies, new approaches to career counseling are necessary (Savickas et al., 2009). Traditional objective-based matching approaches linking person to environment do not adequately account for the complexity and demands of the work environment nor for the needs of individuals today (Schultheiss, 2005). Many researchers have argued for career assessments that are holistic in nature and integrate the subjective perspective, such as qualitative, narrative, and constructivist approaches (Savickas, 2005; Schultheiss, 2005; Whiston & Rahardja, 2005). As Reid (2005) asserts, narrative approaches to career counseling are essential to helping younger individuals build a story that helps them effectively negotiate the ever-changing world of work. In order for the field of career counseling to move forward and fully embrace more qualitative approaches to career counseling,

¹ Department of Counseling and Human Services, Old Dominion University, Norfolk, VA, USA

² School of Psychology & Counseling, Regent University, Virginia Beach, VA, USA

³ Center for Psychological Studies, Nova Southeastern University, Fort Lauderdale, FL, USA

Corresponding Author:

Mark C. Reh fuss, Department of Counseling and Human Services, 110 Education Building, Old Dominion University, Norfolk, VA 23529, USA

Email: mrehfuss@odu.edu

these interventions and their effectiveness must be examined (Brott, 2001; Bujold, 2004; Reid, 2005; Young & Collin, 2004).

One of the earliest qualitative career assessments and interventions is the career style interview (CSI) developed by Savickas (1989, 1995, 2001) more than 20 years ago. Since its inception, the CSI has been clarified and refined as a narrative qualitative counseling intervention closely tied to the theory of career construction (Taber, Hartung, Briddick, Briddick, & Reh fuss, 2011). The CSI is a semistructured interview that asks clients open-ended questions about their role models, favorite magazines, TV shows, school subjects, story, and early memories in order to uncover the clients' vocational personality and life themes. By being able to know who they are and where they have been, individuals are able to construct the next chapter of their career and resolve their career concern by making choices congruent with their ideal self (Savickas, 2002, 2005, 2009; Taber et al., 2011). Consistent with the theory, the CSI is designed to help individuals with their career concern, increase their sense of self-efficacy and career adaptability, and facilitate goal-directed vocational behavior (Savickas, 2005, 2006, 2008).

Reports of the CSI have been presented at many conferences and included in numerous journal articles and book chapters. However, there are no published studies examining its outcome variables from the participant's perspective (Hanson, 1995; Reh fuss, 2007; Savickas, 1989, 1993, 1995, 2005). Much of the CSI's function is based on theory alone and has yet to be validated through research (Reh fuss, Cosio, & Del Corso, **IN PRESS**); thus, sound research is clearly warranted (Heppner & Heppner, 2003; Walsh & Savickas, 2005; Whiston & Oliver, 2005). Overall impact, change in occupational narrative, retention, and engagement in exploratory career behaviors are specific career counseling outcomes that may validate the effectiveness of the CSI. Therefore, this study sought to initially explore the impact of the CSI on individuals' career concerns 2 weeks after participating in the CSI in the context of career style counseling (Savickas, 2009).

The researchers of the present study selected a qualitative research design to examine the outcomes of the CSI because it is useful in the early stages of exploration where little research exists (Creswell et al., 2007; Hill, Williams, & Thompson, 1997) and because the CSI is a qualitative career assessment (Savickas, 2005). Therefore, using qualitative methods, the researchers explored the overall impact of the CSI on participants' career concerns and career narrative as well as their recall of career style components and engagement in career exploration behaviors 2 weeks after participating in the CSI.

Method

Participants

The final sample of participants with career concerns ($N = 18$) consisted of 13 women and 5 men ranging in age from 20 to 55 ($M = 35.6$, $SD = 10.01$). In all 10 (56%) participants were married and 8 (44%) were single. The majority of participants identified themselves as Caucasian ($n = 17$), and one indicated other ($n = 1$). In all 16 (89%) participants indicated that they held at least a Bachelor's degree, 1 (6%) indicated they had 2 years of college education, and 1 (6%) did not specify. Participants' career concerns varied: Three (17%) were unemployed and having difficulty obtaining work, two (11%) were underemployed and were looking to move to new jobs where they could more fully use their talents, five (28%) wanted help clarifying their occupational goals and future career options, two (11%) were having difficulty at work and wanted to make sure their current occupation was a good fit, two (11%) wanted validation that they were making the right initial career choice, and four (22%) were considering career transitions that would involve pursuing more education.

Of the counselors ($N = 18$), nine (50%) were licensed professional counselors, three (17%) were school counselors, two (11%) were counselor trainees, two (11%) were pastoral counselors, one

(6%) was a licensed clinical social worker, and one (6%) was a licensed associate counselor. Years of experience working as a full-time therapist varied with nine (50%) indicating 9 or more years, two (11%) indicating 7–9 years, four (22%) indicating 4–6 years, and three (17%) indicating 1–3 years. All of the counselors were enrolled in a CACREP-accredited online doctoral program in Counselor Education and Supervision and received the same training in how to administer the CSI within the context of career style counseling (Reh fuss, 2009b).

Participants and counselors, therefore, were geographically located across 16 different states in the United States, and one participant and counselor were located internationally. Participants were clients identified by the counselors as having career concerns that they wished to address with career counseling. Both counselors and participants agreed to participate in the study, and completed informed consent documents and releases authorizing the use of case reports and transcripts for data analysis.

Measures

Three qualitative measures were used in this exploratory investigation of the impact of the CSI on clients' career concerns. First, the researchers developed and used a semistructured qualitative interview to assess each client's experience with the CSI 2 weeks after participating in the CSI. Second, researchers utilized the future career autobiography (FCA; Reh fuss, 2009a) in order to validate whether or not there had been a change in the client's narrative as a result of participating in the CSI. Finally, counselors' case reports were used to obtain demographic information and the initial career style components (life theme, Holland code, success formula).

Semistructured interview. The research team, consisting of a doctoral student and three faculty members in counselor education familiar with the CSI, developed a semistructured qualitative interview to be conducted with participants 2 weeks after taking the CSI. The interview was comprised of 22 broad and specific questions designed to explore the participants' experience with the CSI. The interview questions were consistent with the goals of the study to explore the impact the CSI made on participants 2 weeks after engaging in the CSI. This included examining impact on individuals' career concerns, their overall impressions and retention of the CSI, their ability to recall specific career style components, and their career exploration behaviors.

The researchers included broad questions to draw out thick narrative responses and narrow questions to focus on specific recall. Broad questions asking about the CSI experience included: "How, if at all, did the CSI impact your career concern? What was the most meaningful aspect of the CSI for you? What do you still reflect upon now 2 weeks after participating in the CSI? What are some components of the CSI that you recall? And "Is there anything else about your experience with the CSI that you want us to know?" Other questions were specifically focused on recall, such as: "What was your three-letter Holland code? What was your life theme? What was your success formula?" Finally, several questions asked about specific career exploration behaviors they had or had not engaged in at 2-week follow-up.

Future career autobiography. The second measure used was the FCA (Reh fuss, 2009a). The FCA is designed to draw out an individual's future career narrative by asking them to write a brief paragraph about where they hope to be in life and what they hope to be doing occupationally 5 years from the present (Reh fuss, 2009a). One of the purposes of the FCA is to identify changes in an individual's life and career narratives over time (Reh fuss, 2009a). The FCA, when given to the same individual before and after career interventions, provides the researcher with an objective measurement of change or lack of change in an individual's life and occupational narrative (Reh fuss, 2009a). This is achieved by comparing and assessing the pre- and post-FCA measures along with their narrative

content. The evaluation involves identifying repeated and new content in the two assessments including the exact phrases, words, and constructs used by the individual. The measure also helps to delineate what type of narrative career change or stagnation has occurred by placing most narratives into one of eight common thematic categories (Rehfluss, 2009a). Since the CSI is narrative in nature, it should produce a change in individuals' occupational narratives as measured by the FCA.

Counselor case reports. The third measure used was the counselors' detailed case reports that were completed during and after the two CSI sessions but before the 2-week follow-up interview. The CSI is narrative intensive, and in order to aid in processing, the counselor makes copious notes and transcription of the participant's responses to questions (Savickas, 2005, 2006). The case report for each participant included a transcription of the participant's responses to the CSI questions, demographic data for the participant and counselor, the initial identified career concern, three-letter Holland code, developed success formula, identified life themes, career adaptability issues, and a detailed description of how the counselor conducted the counseling sessions, including the interpretation of the CSI. These case reports provided the baseline client data for recall comparison with the client's 2-week follow-up interview responses.

Data Collection Procedures

For consistency of application, all counselors received the same online training in how to administer the CSI within the context of career style counseling, following the recommendations of Rehfluss (2009b). After undergoing this training, the counselors contacted participants and arranged to conduct the CSI over two face-to-face career counseling sessions, as recommended by Savickas (2005, 2009), and to conduct the qualitative follow-up interview 2 weeks later.

In the first session, participants completed their initial FCA and then participated in the CSI. During the second session, counselors interpreted the results of the CSI with the participants in accordance with Savickas (2005, 2009), reviewed the results of the self-directed search (SDS), coconstructed the success formula and life themes, and then had participants complete the final FCA. In an effort to reduce inconsistencies, the counselors used the SDS rather than the CSI to obtain the participants' three-letter Holland code. After the second session, the counselors wrote and submitted for analysis their exhaustive case reports detailing the discussions and content of the two CSI interview sessions.

A total of 2 weeks later, the counselors contacted their participants for the follow-up interview. The counselors used the semistructured qualitative interview questions to elicit information regarding participants' experience and recollection of the CSI. Counselors transcribed participants' interview responses and submitted the transcripts to the researchers for analysis.

Data Analysis Procedures

Impact on career concern. Consensual qualitative research (CQR) methodology was used to analyze the narrative data resulting from the follow-up interview's broader questions focusing on the impact of the CSI upon the participant's career concern (Hill et al., 1997, 2005). The CQR analysis involves a three-step process that includes grouping the narrative data into large domains for each case, identifying core ideas within each domain for each case, and then categorizing the core ideas according to similarities across all cases (Hill et al., 1997). The CQR is particularly helpful in that it forces the researchers to examine the data and then to negotiate a consensus on the thematic meanings at each of the three steps in the process. This collaborative process produces a more objective interpretation of the data, recognizing there are multiple ways of viewing narrative data (Hill et al., 1997, 2005; Patten, 2009).

In addition, the CQR model provides a specific technique by which to report frequency of findings. For instance, *general* is assigned for themes reported in all cases (100%), *typical* for themes reported in half (50%) or more of the cases, and *variant* for themes reported in less than half but in at least two (12%) of the cases (Hill et al., 1997, 2005). The researchers used this CQR methodology to analyze the transcribed 2-week follow-up interviews for each participant. They followed the three steps negotiating consensus on the number of large domains and core ideas for each case, and then categorized these across all cases until finally agreeing upon several themes that fully represent the data (Hill et al., 1997, 2005). These final thematic results were reviewed by an independent auditor and member checked by several of the participants. Brief narrative descriptions of the findings are provided in the Results section to allow for further validation by the reader (Creswell, 2009).

Occupational narratives. To measure the effectiveness of the CSI to change a participant's occupational narrative, researchers examined, coded, and compared each participant's initial and subsequent FCA according to methods outlined in Reh fuss (2009a). This analysis involves identifying keywords, verbs, and phrases in each FCA independently and then comparing the findings of both FCA's side by side to identify both consistent and differing content. The change or lack of change between the two FCA's is then placed into one of seven core themes identified by Reh fuss (2009a). These themes include: general fields and desires to specification and exploration, nondescript "job" to specification, disregard to direction, vagueness to focus, hindered to hopeful, fixation to openness, and stagnation. The four researchers worked independently to identify the theme that they felt was most appropriate for each participant's narrative. Then they came together to discuss and negotiate a consensus on the final placement of each participant's narrative into only one primary categorical theme, although some narratives may have reflected multiple themes.

Recall of CSI. Recall of the CSI was addressed in two ways. First, by four open-ended questions related to the most meaningful aspect of the CSI that were asked at the 2-week follow-up. These questions included: "What is the first thing that comes to your mind when I say, 'What do you recall about the CSI?'" Which question of the CSI, if any, did you find to be most meaningful? What was meaningful about it? Is there any part of the CSI you still reflect on, or think about, or use?" And, "What did you take away from the CSI that you believe you will never forget?" Responses to these questions were categorized by the components or aspects mentioned by the participant and listed under most meaningful aspect of the CSI as descriptive statistics.

Secondly, three questions asked the participant to specifically recall three components of the CSI including their three-letter Holland code, success formula, and life themes. Responses to these questions at 2-week follow-up were evaluated by comparing them to the participant's initial Holland code, success formula, and life themes found in the counselor's case report. The evaluation method for recall followed procedures outlined in previous retention studies with participant's initial and 2-week follow-up responses for each component compared and coded as "accurate," "partly accurate," or "not at all accurate" (Hansen, Kozberg, & Goranson, 1994; Swanson, Leuwerke, D'Achiardi, Edwards, & Edwards, 2006).

Exploratory career behavior. At the 2-week follow-up interview, participants were asked whether they engaged in any specific exploratory career behaviors after engaging in the CSI. Participants indicated whether they talked to someone about the CSI, made phone calls, searched the Internet, or spoke to a significant other about their career concern or interests. Information was coded "yes" or "no" with respect to these specific questions, although the participants elaborated with open-ended responses.

Table 1. Impact Themes

Theme	Number of Cases	Percentage of Cases	Category
Helpful with career concern	18	100	General
Awareness	16	89	Typical
Self-confidence	16	89	Typical
Direction	14	78	Typical
Confirmation	11	61	Typical
Encouragement	9	50	Typical
Clarity	7	39	Variant
Connections	7	39	Variant
Self-discovery	6	33	Variant

Results

Impact of CSI on Career Concern

The CQR analysis of 2-week follow-up interviews focused on the impact that the CSI made upon the participant's career concern. The three-step CQR analysis resulted in the identification of nine themes (see Table 1). Participants *generally* felt that the CSI helped them make progress on their career concerns, and most also *typically* experienced awareness, self-confidence, direction, confirmation, and encouragement. In addition, *variant* findings revealed that some participants also experienced a sense of clarity, connection, and self-discovery.

General Findings

Helpfulness. The one general finding across all cases ($N = 18$, 100%) was that each participant reported that the CSI helped them make progress on their career concern. One participant stated, "Yes, it helped me to see that certain themes in my life could be carried out through my career." Another said, "Yes, I feel clearer and more confident." Another reported, "Yes, it helped me realize I have what it takes to achieve my goals. I just need to get in there and do it."

Typical Findings

Awareness. The CSI typically facilitated increased awareness in participants ($n = 16$, 89%). For example, participants demonstrated self-awareness with words like, "insight," "realization," "awareness," and phrases such as "hadn't thought about it" and "made me think." Sometimes the awareness was in the form of the participant's new understanding that they could change. For instance, "The interview helped me realize that I can actually achieve that career change."

Self-confidence. A prevalent typical finding ($n = 16$, 89%) was that participants reported feeling more self-confident because of the CSI. One participant stated, "This has helped me see that I can and do create the kind of environment within which I can succeed." The CSI seemed to address participants' underlying self-doubt and anxiety regarding their career concerns, as several stated that the CSI was "empowering." One participant put it this way: "I feel more empowered to decide for myself rather than letting others' opinions govern my decisions."

Direction. Participants typically ($n = 14$, 78%) felt that they had gained perspective on the direction they should be heading. They used words and phrases such as "looking at new possibilities, helps prioritize what's important," and "provides direction" when referring to the CSI. One participant stated, "It helped me get closer to a decision, gave me options, helped me know how to evaluate, and it confirmed my interests."

Confirmation. Participants typically ($n = 11$, 61%) indicated that the CSI produced a sense of confirmation. Participants described confirmation differently than self-confidence. It entailed words like “assurance” and “validation,” and phrases like “solidified what I’m doing right now” and “okay to be where you are.” Participants heard their stories and confirmed what they already knew to be true: “To be honest, I don’t see myself differently. I knew I was headed in that direction. It is a lot clearer now, however.” For some, it was helpful having a counselor confirm their inner experience. “It confirmed what I already knew . . . gave me outside perspective with some hope of success.” Others acquired a sense of peace, “less stress, not worried” and “I feel more peace with myself.”

Encouragement. Typically ($n = 9$, 50%) participants experienced a sense of encouragement. They expressed this with a myriad of words and phrases such as “hope, motivated, excitement,” and “optimistic.” While self-confidence involves self-efficacy and a belief in oneself, encouragement describes a feeling and the possibility of what could be: “Oh, I am excited because I honestly felt that I was too old to change careers now, and I just thought this is the life that was handed to me and I should just accept it.” Another said, “It revived my dream again.”

Variant Findings

Clarity. The CSI helped some participants ($n = 7$, 39%) obtain a sense of clarity. This clarity involved either a mental image of options for future career decisions or directions they should pursue. One participant stated, “I definitely feel less stressed out. I think before I was very confused, and now I feel clearer about the steps that I need to take. I feel like I now have a clearer path.” Another shared the same experience: “I think I have a clearer picture of what I would like to do for a career.”

Connections. The CSI also helped some participants ($n = 7$, 39%) make connections between the past and the present. Participants reported a new sense of continuity and unity of self and work: “Yes, there has been some sense of order; no real career, but a lot of strong connections between what I have done.” Frequent phrases included “provided me a cohesive picture, gives continuity, how much sense it all made,” and “can see how stories came together.” Connections also included the relationship between the participant and the counselor: “Meeting someone who cared enough to listen to my stories.” While another shared, “I won’t ever forget the positive affirmation the counselor gave me.”

Self-discovery. The last variant theme that emerged was a sense of self-discovery. Participants ($n = 6$, 33%) shared that the CSI helped them “discover who I am, showed my needs” and “reflected many parts of my personality.” In some instances, insight was inextricably related to this discovery. “I discovered who I am through the stories in my past.” Other participants related this sense of discovery to their needs: “I need to have more confidence in my abilities. I need to make it happen.”

Impact of CSI on Career Narrative

In order to measure whether the CSI produced a change in the client’s occupational narratives, researchers analyzed and compared pre- and post-FCA’s to determine the thematic degree of change that fell in-line with one of seven themes identified by Reh fuss (2009a; see Table 2). Overall, most participants ($n = 15$, 83%) experienced some change in their occupational narratives, with movement toward a more specific narrative occurring in more than half of the participants ($n = 12$, 67%) FCA’s.

Table 2. Change in Client's Narrative

Theme	Number of Cases	Percentage of Cases
General fields and desires to		
Specification and exploration	5	28
Nondescript "job" to specification	4	22
Stagnation	3	17
Fixated to openness	2	11
Vagueness to focus	2	11
General interests to		
More specification	1	6
Hindered to hopeful	1	6

General fields and desires to specification and exploration. The narratives of five participants revealed a movement from general fields and desires to more specification and often became more expansive. For example, one participant's initial FCA stated, "I hope to have art out at several galleries," but indicating in the second FCA, "I want enough artwork to create a website to sell from . . . to own my own studio . . . perhaps I wouldn't mind doing biology work too." Another participant initially stated, "I see myself higher up in a non-profit or running a program that oversees the funding of projects to help people." While in the second FCA he stated, "I hope to own a company, not just work in one . . . I want to help people solve problems and create a difference in their life."

Nondescript job to specification. Four participants demonstrated a movement from a nondescript job to a specified one. For example, one participant stated, "I hope to have a job that is more career oriented since my current job is just to earn a living." After the CSI, the FCA changed to, "I hope to be working as an educator, or a counselor, perhaps even a career counselor." Another participant initially stated, "I'm not completely sure what I want to be doing occupationally in five years." Afterwards, her FCA narrative became, "I want to be in the social service field working to help others, perhaps in the role of making policy in the social services."

Stagnation. Stagnation means no change in the narrative between the initial and subsequent assessment (Reh fuss, 2009a). Three participants had no change in their narrative. Two of the three participants wrote on their second FCA's, "I wouldn't change anything." For the third participant, the FCA content remained the same: "In five years, I hope to be a high school history teacher, coach swimming, and be married to my current boyfriend." In the second FCA she wrote, "I hope to be married to my boyfriend; I see myself teaching high school history; and I hope to coach swimming."

Fixed to openness. The FCA narratives from two participants moved from fixed to openness (Reh fuss, 2009a). One participant stated, "In five years I hope to be working in the medical field." After the CSI he stated, "I would like to incorporate music and arts into a job that makes others happier and/or healthier." Another participant initially stated, "It is my goal to continue in this career path but in a different location." Afterwards, he expanded and opened up to more options stating, "I hope to have a similar position, but I would like to supplement my income through personal investment in the stock market, and I hope to have an MBA in the next one to three years."

Vagueness to focus. Two participants' FCA's moved from a sense of uncertainty and vagueness about their career to one with a clearer direction and focus (Reh fuss, 2009a). One participant began by stating that he hoped to be "doing something in vocational work" and was "contemplating becoming a chaplain." His subsequent FCA demonstrated more focus: "I hope to transition from

Table 3. Most Meaningful Aspect

Component	Number of Cases	Percentage of Cases	Category
Role models	10	56	Typical
Early memories	6	33	Variant
Life themes	6	33	Variant
Holland code (SDS)	3	17	Variant
Future career autobiography	3	17	Variant
Favorite books	2	11	Variant
Success formula	2	11	Variant

teaching to ministry. I want to work with people who are wounded (mentally, emotionally, spiritually) to help them grow as I have.” Another moved from a vague goal: “I know I would like to help others” to a more focused goal: “I see myself helping others through creative approaches to problem solving.”

General interests to more specification. One participant moved from general interests to more specification in identifying fields to explore. In her initial FCA she stated, “I hope to have a position that allows me to utilize my creativity and ability to work well with others.” Her subsequent FCA stated, “In five years, I may be in a new office situation or in an education setting—more research on my part is needed to determine the specifics.”

Hindered to hopeful. Typically, hindered participants express a sense of fear or indifference toward work (Reh fuss, 2009a). One participant’s subsequent FCA revealed a change from hindered to hopeful. This participant initially stated, “I am 34 years old, so it seems a little late to be trying to plan where I’ll be and what I’ll be doing in five years.” Afterwards, she stated, “I thought that it might be too late to pursue a career because of age and having a family. That changed . . . career counseling has motivated me to pursue my dreams. I feel like I can make these dreams happen.”

Recall of CSI

Most meaningful aspect. At the 2-week follow-up, participants’ responses to the four questions related to the aspect of the CSI that stood out the most to them were gathered and categorized to provide descriptive statistics. Seven components were reported (see Table 3). Only one component, role models ($n = 10$, 56%), was reported by more than half of the participants, although six other components were also identified. Participants often expressed more than one component as being significant. One participant expressed a significant connection with their role model when stating, “The first thing I think about is how I’m like Superman . . . what I have in common with my heroes.” Other participants responded similarly: “They [the role models] didn’t stand out until you explained that they were people who exemplify who I wanted to become,” and “The question about the superheroes (was the most meaningful) . . . to see how their values related to me.” Many of the participants described the role models question as “insightful.” They stated they had forgotten about or had not thought of their role models for quite some time. Once the counselor explained how role models reflect their ideal self-concept, many participants found it “revealing” and “eye-opening.”

Life theme, success formula, Holland code. At the 2-week follow-up, participants were asked to recall specific components of the CSI including their life themes, success formula, and three-letter Holland code. Their responses were compared to their results recorded on their case reports 2 weeks earlier. More than half of the participants ($n = 10$, 56%) accurately recalled at least one life theme; three

(17%) accurately identified three or more; three (17%) identified two, and four (22%) identified one. The other eight (44%) participants were not able to accurately recall or identify aspects of their life themes.

Regarding the success formula, nine (50%) of the participants accurately recalled all or most aspects of their success formula, while the other nine (50%) recalled nothing. As for the three-letter Holland code typology, 15 (83%) of the participants were able to accurately recall at least part of their three-letter Holland code: eight (44%) accurately recalled their exact Holland code, one (6%) recalled the correct three letters but in the wrong order, and six (33%) recalled one or two of the three letters correctly. Three (17%) participants were unable to recall any part of their Holland code. When considering all three components together, only one (6%) participant could recall none of the components.

Career Exploration Behavior

As a result of taking the CSI, a majority of participants ($n = 15$, 83%) had engaged in one or more career exploration behaviors at 2-week follow-up. In all 12 (67%) participants sought additional information and 6 (33%) had not. In all 13 (72%) participants spoke to someone about their career plans and 5 (28%) had not. In all 11 (61%) participants either made a phone call or searched the Internet and 7 (39%) had not. Finally, three (17%) participants did not engage in any career exploration behaviors.

Discussion

Themes

The thematic findings of this study confirm the effectiveness of the CSI in helping individuals to make progress on their career concerns regardless of their age, type of career concern, or counselors' first-time experience utilizing the CSI. As a result of the CSI, participants stated that they experienced *awareness, self-confidence, direction, a sense of confirmation, encouragement, clarity, connection, and discovery*. Theoretically, these themes are consistent with career construction theory (CCT) and narrative career counseling (Savickas, 2005, 2006, 2008). First, individuals must be aware of the way they have constructed their lives up to the present and how they would prefer to construct them in the future (Savickas, 2006). This is consistent with four of the themes participants experienced: *awareness, clarity, direction, and discovery*.

Secondly, narrative interventions are designed to increase individuals' sense of self-efficacy by helping them build a stronger, more confident story (Beeson, 2009; Savickas, 2005). These aims are congruent with the themes the individuals experienced as a sense of *self-confidence* and *encouragement*. Finally, the CSI is designed to help clients hear their story and the advice they have for themselves (Taber et al., 2011). They appear to feel that the interview *confirmed* where they are heading (i.e., advice to themselves) or simply what they already knew about themselves to be true (i.e., values and interests). While this study did not directly examine which career concerns the CSI is most effective with, results clearly indicate that regardless of concern, individuals felt the CSI was helpful.

Career concerns are conceptualized by career construction theory as a failure to adapt with respect to one of four domains: concern, control, curiosity, or competence (Savickas, 2005). The eight themes found in this study each appear to reflect qualities that the CSI developed in the individuals that they needed to successfully adapt to their current career concern. Participants who expressed a career *concern* about finding a career to fit their vocational personality demonstrated a sense of direction by making a decision, pursuing school, or acquiring different skills. Those who struggled with career *control* either found encouragement to handle the obstacle in front of them, or

developed an awareness of what those obstacles were. For those participants who demonstrated insecurity with respect to their sense of self-efficacy (confidence), the CSI helped them feel more certain about their ability to move forward. Yet, for others the CSI simply confirmed that they are heading in the right direction. Additionally, participants demonstrated increased curiosity and adaptive coping behaviors by seeking out more information, talking to others, or making career decisions. The apparent ability of the CSI to address a variety of career adaptability concerns supports the assertion by Savickas (2006) that the CSI is designed to increase individuals' career adaptability. This strength would make it a valuable tool for counselors to use in addressing and enhancing the career adaptabilities of individuals with career concerns.

FCA Narratives

The results of FCA assessments indicate that the CSI effectively produces a change in career narratives consistent with narrative theory (Reh fuss, 2009a). Nearly all participants ($n = 15$, 83%) experienced change in their FCA career narratives. The movement from a general to more specific narrative occurred in 12 (67%) cases. This movement toward specificity validates what the CSI intends to do: crystallize self-identity and imagine potential future narratives through which they can implement this identity (Bujold, 2004; Savickas, 2005). In some cases, individuals felt more self-confident as a result of the CSI and, therefore, were able to be more specific about their future career aspirations. Furthermore, the movement between pre- and post-FCA's revealed how participants became more flexible and open as they considered new possibilities for future work roles. The FCA narratives of these individuals appear to support the CSI as a tool that develops and increases an individual's career adaptabilities (Savickas, 2005).

The three individuals whose narratives reflected the theme of stagnation each had a career concern related to confirmation that they were in the right occupation or had chosen the right field. It appears that when their choice was confirmed by the CSI, no narrative change took place. This may clarify that stagnation in the occupational narratives of those seeking confirmation should be expected. Overall, it appears that the CSI is effective in producing change in individuals' occupational narratives consistent with and reflective of the changes in their lives.

Recall Meaningful Aspect

The findings of the study indicate that a majority of participants ($n = 10$, 56%) found the question pertaining to their role models to be the most meaningful and easily recalled aspect of the CSI. This interesting finding is significant, as no other studies have examined what aspects of the CSI individuals continue to reflect upon. Childhood role models and heroes are considered to be the individual's ideal self and solution to their current career concern (Savickas, 2005, 2009). It appears that these role models helped participants understand how their past connects to their present (Bujold, 2004). This awareness helped many participants think about their ideal self in a way that made it easy to reflect upon and recall. The novelty of seeing how their identity is similar to their childhood role models may explain why many participants continue to reflect upon those role models. The expansion of participants' self-narratives is consistent with the function of narrative theory and its interventions (Beeson, 2009; Bujold, 2004; Freedman & Combs, 1996). This fuller narrative seems to have given participants a greater sense of meaning and unity consistent with the holistic manner in which the CSI addresses individuals' career concerns (McMahon, Patton, & Watson, 2003).

Recall Components

Based on the results of this study, the combination of the SDS and the CSI resulted in 15 (83%) individuals accurately recalling their Holland code. These findings support the effectiveness of career interventions that utilize objective and subjective measures together to provide a holistic, comprehensive, and complementary perspective of the individual (Savickas, 2005). Previous retention studies related to the Holland code demonstrated low retention rates (Swanson et al., 2006; Toman & Savickas, 1997); yet, most participants in this study were able to remember their Holland code with accuracy. This may have happened because counselors connected participants' Holland typology to their life themes and career narrative. As a result, participants' integrated their Holland code with their story and viewed suggested occupations as offering "possibilities not predictions" (Savickas, 2005, p. 47). Consequently, their Holland code may have become more meaningful; and thus, easier to recall (Ausubel, 2000; Savickas, 2005).

Recall of life themes and success formulas in this study were at average levels possibly because counselors new to the CSI may have difficulty in using narrative tools that require refining, clarifying, and specifying the individual's narratives in a concise manner. These findings, however, suggest that narrative interventions may enhance the recall of objective career assessments and that counselors using such assessments should not neglect integration of the results with the individual's story.

Exploration Behavior

Overall, participants engaged in goal-directed vocational behavior by seeking out additional information or talking with others after participating in the CSI. These results support the CSI as a means of facilitating goal-directed vocational behavior or coping behavior related to each career adaptability component of CCT (Savickas, 2005). Engaging in exploratory behavior, however, may not always be the goal of career counseling or an appropriate outcome measure for some career concerns. For the individuals that were simply seeking validation or confirmation of choice, the CSI's ability to develop their career confidence might have been all that was needed for them to settle on where they were headed vocationally.

Future Research and Limitations

Now that qualitative inquiry has revealed specific outcomes of the CSI, future research should seek to clarify and expand these findings using quantitative measures. Specific studies designed to clarify the impact of the CSI upon individuals' career decision making self-efficacy, career confidence, and development of career adaptabilities would be helpful. Studies that examine and compare the CSI's overall impact with other subjective and objective career interventions may clarify when the CSI is more or less beneficial to individuals. In addition, exploration of its impact upon specific career concerns such as initial career choice, career transitions, and employment counseling could delineate how the CSI helps specific career concerns or when it is most appropriately utilized. Finally, broadening the scope of study to include a larger, more diverse sample of gender, age, ethnicity, and culture could shed light on the CSI's ability to be helpful to individuals located within differing individual, social and life contexts.

The findings of this study may be limited by several factors related to its design and application. Since the design was qualitative and exploratory in nature, the study used a small sample size that was ethnically homogeneous and prevents the finding from being generalizable beyond the sample. A short follow-up time of 2 weeks was also used and may limit the implications of the study, as a longer or shorter time period may have yielded differing results. In addition, the counselors who conducted the CSI also conducted the follow-up interviews. This may have caused some participants to

respond in more favorable terms than had they been conducted by anonymous individuals. In order to validate the findings of this study, future research should include a larger and more diverse multicultural sample, extend the longitudinal nature of the study and use independent researchers to conduct the follow-up interviews.

In addition, the application of the CSI by counselors newly trained in the intervention might have impacted the findings of this study related to component recall. First, the CSI is designed for experienced counselors to identify the participant's three-letter Holland code solely from the interview questions; however, it has been recommended that counselors new to the Holland model gain this information through having the client complete the SDS (Rehfuß, 2009b). Since this study used counselors newly trained in the CSI, it was determined that integrating the SDS instrument to identify the three-letter Holland code would increase the consistency of application by all counselors. Future studies could clarify each instrument's relationship to recall by comparing recall outcomes of individuals taking one of three interventions: the CSI, the CSI with integrated SDS, or the SDS.

Second, while all counselors had the exact same training in the CSI, it was impossible to ensure that all counselors used and applied the intervention in the same manner. The ability or lack of ability of counselors to identify participant's life themes, coconstruct a success formula, and interpret their Holland code may have directly impacted the participants' ability to recall these components. Consistency of counselor application of the CSI should be accounted for in future research by having clients work with the same counselor who follows the exact same application protocol with each participant.

Summary

The findings of this study clearly demonstrate the helpfulness and importance of the CSI for individuals dealing with a wide variety of career concerns. The CSI increased participants' awareness of the way they have constructed their lives up to the present and how they would prefer to construct them in the future. It assisted them in clarifying and drawing connections between the past, present, and future in a way that helped them understand what they want to do, who they want to be, and what they needed in order to feel more complete, confident, and whole (Savickas, 2005). The findings support the CSI as a meaningful and holistic approach to career counseling for individuals dealing with a wide array of career concerns. The CSI accomplishes this even when the counselors are newly trained in using the tool and are not experienced career counselors or vocational psychologists.

These results validate the effectiveness of the CSI and support its use as a subjective and qualitative approach to career counseling, one that helps individuals with career concerns to know who they are, where they have been, and where they want to go. As practitioners strive to assist their clients in negotiating career transitions and adapting to an ever-changing world of work, the CSI should not be overlooked. Its ability to facilitate and empower client transformation and engender hopefulness is crucial to helping individuals experience productive lives and careers.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The authors declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Funding

The authors received no financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

References

- Ausubel, D. (2000). *The acquisition and retention of knowledge: A cognitive view*. Norwell, MA: Kluwer Academic.

- Beeson, C. R. (2009). *The impact of a narrative informed intervention on career decision self-efficacy and occupational engagement* (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from Dissertations & Theses: Full Text. (Publication No. AAT 3352774). Available at <http://proquest.umi.com/pqdweb?did=1730112291&sid=6&Fmt=2&clientId=3505&RQT=309&VName=PQD>.
- Brott, P. E. (2001). The storied approach: A postmodern perspective for career counseling. *Career Development Quarterly*, 49, 304–313.
- Bujold, C. (2004). Constructing career through narrative. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 64, 470–484. doi: 10.1016/j.jvb.2003.12.010.
- Creswell, J. W. (2007). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.
- Creswell, J. W. (2009). *Research design* (3rd ed.). Los Angeles, CA: Sage.
- Freedman, J., & Combs, G. (1996). *Narrative therapy: The social construction of preferred realities*. New York, NY: W. W. Norton.
- Hansen, J., Kozberg, J., & Goranson, D. (1994). Accuracy of student recall of strong interest inventory results 1 year after interpretation. *Measurement & Evaluation in Counseling & Development*, 26, 235–242.
- Hanson, C. L. (1995). *The objectivity of personality and career assessment using the career style interview*. Retrieved from ProQuest Digital Dissertations. (Publication No. AAT 9536634). Available at <http://proquest.umi.com/pqdweb?did=742160201&sid=5&Fmt=2&clientId=3505&RQT=309&VName=PQD>.
- Heppner, M., & Heppner, P. (2003). Identifying process variables in career counseling: A research agenda. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 62, 429–452. . doi: 10.1016/S00018791(02)00053-2.
- Hill, C., Williams, E., & Thompson, B. (1997). A guide to conducting consensual qualitative research. *The Counseling Psychologist*, 25, 517–572. . doi:10.1177/0011000097254001.
- Hill, C., Knox, S., Thompson, B., Williams, E., Hess, S., & Ladany, N. (2005). Consensual qualitative research: An update. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 52, 196–205. . doi: 10.1037/0022-0167.52.2.196.
- McMahon, M., Patton, W., & Watson, M. (2003). Developing qualitative career assessment processes. *The Career Development Quarterly*, 51, 194–202.
- Patten, M. (2009). *Understanding research methods* (7th ed.). Glendale, CA: Pyrczak.
- Rehfuss, M. (2007). The case of Frank: Application of the theory of career construction. *The Career Planning and Adult Development Journal*, 23, 68–76.
- Rehfuss, M. (2009a). The future career autobiography: A narrative measure of career intervention effectiveness. *The Career Development Quarterly*, 58, 82–90.
- Rehfuss, M. (2009b). Teaching career construction and the career style interview. *The Career Planning and Adult Development Journal*, 25, 58–71.
- Rehfuss, M., Cosio, S., & Del Corso, J. (2011). Counselors' perspectives of the career style interview. *Career Development Quarterly*, 59, 208–218.
- Reid, H. (2005). Narrative and career guidance: Beyond small talk and towards useful dialogue for the 21st century. *International Journal for Educational and Vocational Guidance*, 5, 125–136. . doi: 10.1007/210775-005-8790-5.
- Savickas, M. L. (1989). Career style assessment and counseling. In T. Sweeney (Ed.), *Adlerian counseling: A practical approach for a new decade* (3rd ed., pp. 289–320). Muncie, IN: Accelerated Development.
- Savickas, M. L. (1993). Career counseling in the postmodern era. *Journal of Cognitive Psychotherapy: An International Quarterly*, 7, 205–215.
- Savickas, M. L. (1995). Constructivist counseling for career indecision. *The Career Development Quarterly*, 43, 363–374.
- Savickas, M. L. (2001). Toward a comprehensive theory of career development, dispositions, concerns, and narratives. In F. T. L. Leong, & A. Barak (Eds.), *Contemporary models in vocational psychology* (pp. 295–320). Mahwah NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

- Savickas, M. L. (2002). Career construction: A developmental theory of vocational behavior. In D. Brown (Ed.), *Career choice and development* (4th ed., pp. 149–205). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Savickas, M. L. (2005). The theory and practice of career construction. In S. D. Brown, & R. W. Lent (Eds.), *Career development and counseling* (pp. 42–70). Hoboken, NJ: Wiley.
- Savickas, M. L. (2006). *Career counseling*. [DVD]. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.
- Savickas, M. L. (2008, December). Life-design international research group: Career adaptability project. Presented at Humboldt Universitat: Berlin, Germany on July 19, 2009. (Berlin Report).
- Savickas, M. L. (2009). Career-style counseling. In T. J. Sweeney (Ed.), *Adlerian counseling and psychotherapy: A practitioner's approach* (5th ed., pp. 183–207). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Savickas, M. L., Nota, L., Rossier, J., Dauwalder, J., Duarte, M. E., Guichard, J., . . . Van Vianen, A. (2009). Life designing: A paradigm for career construction in the 21st century. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 75, 239–250. . doi: 10.1016/j.jvb.2009.04.004.
- Schultheiss, D. E. P. (2005). Qualitative relational career assessment: A constructivist paradigm. *Journal of Career Assessment*, 13, 381–394. . doi: 10.1177/1069072705277912.
- Swanson, P. A. G., Leuwerke, W., D'Achiardi, C., Edwards, J. H., & Edwards, J. (2006). Accuracy in recalling interest inventory information at three time intervals. *Measurement and Evaluation in Counseling and Development*, 38, 236–246.
- Taber, B., Hartung, P., Briddick, H., Briddick, W., & Reh fuss, M. (2011). Career style interview: A contextualized approach to career counseling. *Career Development Quarterly*, 59, 274–287.
- Toman, S. M., & Savickas, M. L. (1997). Career choice readiness moderates the effects of interest inventory interpretation. *Journal of Career Assessment*, 5, 275–291. doi: 10.1177/106907279700500302.
- Walsh, W. B., & Savickas, M. L. (2005). *Handbook of vocational psychology* (3rd ed., pp. 155–194). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Whiston, S. C., & Oliver, L. W. (2005). Career counseling process and outcome. In W. B. Walsh, & M. L. Savickas (Eds.), *Handbook of vocational psychology*. 3rd ed.). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Whiston, S., & Rahardja, D. (2005). Qualitative career assessment: An overview and analysis. *Journal of Career Assessment*, 13, 371–380. . doi: 10.1177/1069072705277910.
- Young, R. A., & Collin, A. (2004). Introduction: Constructivism and social constructionism in the career field. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 64, 373–388.