

Articles

Innovative Moments in Career Construction Counseling: Proposal for an Integrative Model

Paulo Cardoso, Mark L. Savickas, and Miguel M. Gonçalves

This article advances understanding of career construction counseling (CCC) by viewing it through the lens of the innovative moments model (IMM) of how clients construct change. The IMM conceives clients' narrative transformations as resulting from counselors prompting and clients reflecting on exceptions to a problematic self-narrative (i.e., innovative moments; IMs) that emerges in counseling dialogues. On the basis of intensive IMM analysis of CCC case studies, the authors propose an integration of the 2 models that describes the sequence of client change in IMs across the 3 phases of CCC. This proposal provides both conceptual and assessment tools that make it possible to describe and analyze the process of client change through life-designing dialogues. The authors illustrate the integrated framework with vignettes from case studies and conclude by suggesting research to examine the validity and usefulness of the client change sequence and interventions for using this pattern of change to foster client transformation.

Keywords: career construction counseling, innovative moments, career counseling process, client change, counseling tasks

Career construction counseling (CCC; Savickas, 2015, 2019) assists individuals to make career choices and changes through a narrative intervention that revises and elaborates psychosocial identity. During the intervention, a client and a counselor form a collaborative relationship, and, through a life-designing dialogue focused on the reconstruction of meanings, the client's problematic vocational experiences are addressed and the counselor assists the client in resolving his or her career concerns. Research has shown the effectiveness of CCC in achieving these goals (Barclay & Stoltz, 2016; Cardoso, Janeiro, & Duarte, 2017; Di Fabio & Maree, 2011; Obi, 2015; Rehfuess, Del Corso, Glavin, & Wykes, 2011). In addition, counseling process research on narrative innovation (Cardoso, Gonçalves, Duarte, Silva, & Alves, 2016; Cardoso, Silva, Gonçalves, & Duarte, 2014a, 2014b) has provided some clues to understanding the process of change during CCC.

In this article, we aim to present an integrative model of narrative transformation based on empirical evidence from CCC case studies

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intensively analyzed using the innovative moments model (IMM; Gonçalves, Matos, & Santos, 2009) that was originally applied to change in psychotherapy. The integrative model represents a fine-grain understanding of client change and opens new possibilities for advancing CCC practice, theory, and research, as well as career counseling in general. The case studies belong to an exploratory phase of research on the process of client change (Cardoso et al., 2014a, 2014b; Cardoso et al., 2016). We begin by discussing tasks in the CCC model. We then move on to the procedures for performing these tasks using the IMM. Next, we make a proposal about the sequence of clients' change during CCC and illustrate the proposal with vignettes from published case studies. We conclude with some guidelines to use this knowledge in practice as well research suggestions to test our model.

CCC Model

CCC, sometimes called life-design counseling, rests on a narrative conception of vocational development and career management (Savickas, 2013). The basic principle asserts that individuals use the narrative mode of thinking to organize their intrapersonal experiences as well as their interpersonal relationships (Bruner, 1990; Sarbin, 1986; Savickas, 2011). The fundamental role of narratives in self-organization implies a conception of career as a macronarrative or broad story about an individual's work life (Savickas, 2002). As with any autobiographical story, career narratives are organized around life themes—that is, around a core problem or set of problems and the means by which the individual may resolve them (Csikszentmihalyi & Beattie, 1979). The importance of a life theme derives from its structuring function that emplots the past, present, and future of the career story with continuity and coherence (Cardoso, 2012). Because narrative themes organize and direct vocational behavior, revising themes leads to career choice and change.

CCC Phases

Starting from this conception of career as a story, CCC encourages clients to revise their narrative identity, which is defined as “the internalized and evolving story of the self that a person consciously and unconsciously constructs to bind together many different aspects of the self” (McAdams, 2009, p. 404). The fundamental goal of CCC is to enable clients to enact career change in the real world by first constructing new plans that elaborate their career themes and reconstruct a narrative identity with greater coherence and continuity. In CCC, this goal is typically achieved in three phases. In the first phase, clients formulate their career problem and explore micronarratives or narrow stories about the constructs (e.g., role models, interests, values, and scripts) with which they have formed their careers so far. In the second phase, clients identify life themes and reconstruct the micronarratives into a macronarrative that revises the career story. In the third phase, clients use the new story to coconstruct career plans and perform change. Ideally, counselors devote one full 50-minute session to each of the three phases. The first two sessions typically occur a week apart, with the third session occurring a month after the second session. However, some clients complete both

Phases II and III during the second session and do not need a third session. Also, if only one session is possible, counselors usually spend half of that session dealing with Phase I tasks and the other half dealing with Phase II tasks, ending with abbreviated attention to Phase III tasks. Regardless of the number of sessions, the three phases follow the same order, yet the counseling tasks within each phase may vary depending on the flow of the relationship between client and counselor.

Phase I Tasks

During the first phase of CCC, client and counselor discuss expectations regarding the intervention; formulate the career problem, with the counselor supporting the client; and consider adaptability resources. After problem formulation, counselors conduct a Career Construction Interview (CCI; Savickas, 2015) to evoke and explore micronarratives about five career constructs. First, counselors elicit stories about role models by asking clients to describe people and fictional characters whom they admired when they were young. Clients' responses provide the characteristics and attributes that they have used as a blueprint for self-construction. Second, counselors inquire about clients' manifest interests in the form of preferred television shows, websites, or magazines. Each of these media embeds clients in vicarious environments that display activities they find interesting. Third, counselors ask clients to explain the scenario or plot outline of their current favorite story from a book or movie. In summarizing the plot, clients describe, usually with little awareness, a scenario for their next occupational position. Fourth, having elicited stories about clients' character, clients' preferred environments, and a scenario that completes the transition, counselors ask clients about their own advice for enacting the scenario. In stating a favorite saying or motto, clients articulate a salient strategy for managing their transition. The fifth and final topic concerns early recollections from around the age of 6. These recollections reveal the perspective from which clients view the present career problem.

Phase II Tasks

During the second phase of CCC, counselors present clients with a macronarrative of their career story composed by integrating into one broad story the narrow stories about perspective, personal characteristics, manifest interests, anticipated scenario, and auto-therapeutic advice. Voicing the reconstructed career story usually enables the client to shift to a new perspective and revises problematic narratives into more empowering stories. As clients discuss and refine their macronarratives, counselors concentrate on attending to emotions and deepening thematic meaning. Through a coconstruction process, the career narrative is rewritten with longer continuity and stronger coherence as well as extended into the future with increased clarity and greater commitment. To complete the second phase, counselors encourage clients to actualize new scenarios by making plans to take action in the real world.

Phase III Tasks

At the end of the second phase, some clients conclude that they have achieved the goals that they brought to counseling. In this instance,

counselors succinctly address Phase III tasks. However, it is preferable to schedule a third session to comprehensively address these tasks. In a third session, usually scheduled about a month after the second session, counselors discuss the results of clients' initial attempts to perform change, review the reactions of their audiences (e.g., parents, friends, and teachers who provide social support), consider new ideas, and discuss follow-up details. If for some reason a client reports a poor outcome, then the counselor, with the client, may reformulate the career problem and revisit the tasks of Phase II. During the latter half of the third session (or the last 5 minutes of the second session), counselors typically concentrate on reinforcing clients' transformation. They remind clients of their changed perspective, reiterate new understandings, contrast the past story with the anticipated new story, and emphasize how they have changed themselves by performing new actions.

Outcome Research on CCC

Research on CCC with both individuals and groups has shown a significant increase in vocational certainty (Cardoso et al., 2016, 2017; Obi, 2015), career decision-making self-efficacy (Cardoso et al., 2017; Di Fabio & Maree, 2011), and career adaptability (Barclay & Stoltz, 2016; Santilli, Nota, & Hartung, 2019), as well as a decrease in anxiety and feelings of insecurity (Obi, 2015).

The foregoing description of CCC has concentrated on counseling tasks, further elaborated in a textbook (Savickas, 2019) and in a free manual (Savickas, 2015). Benefiting from the IMM (Gonçalves et al., 2009) conceptualization of change and coding tools, recent advances in the CCC model have concentrated on client narrative change.

IMM and Problematic Self-Narratives

According to the IMM (Gonçalves et al., 2017), problematic self-narratives (see saturated self-narratives described by White & Epston, 1990) are organized into implicit rules of meaning that have a wide impact on thoughts, feelings, behaviors, and relationships. Neimeyer, Herrero, and Botella (2006) identified three major forms of problematic self-narratives in clinical practice: dominance, dissociation, and disorganization. Dominance is a feature characterized by a repetitive pattern of meaning that excludes all alternative meanings. The meanings are closed and repetitive, and novelty is hardly accommodated. Dissociation implies the systematic absence of important components of meaning. A typical example would be narratives that lack emotions (e.g., overintellectualized narratives) or narratives devoid of intentionality (e.g., things “just” happen). In disorganization, clients move from one event to another in a disconnected way, as narratives seem unable to create order out of the experiential chaos. These problematic self-narratives create expectancies, biases, and feelings that constrain meaning-making options and make it difficult for individuals to accommodate unique experiences or even important aspects of everyday experiences.

The patterns of narrative dominance, dissociation, and disorganization seem conceptually related to vocational identity statuses of foreclosure, moratorium, and diffusion (Marcia, 1980). For instance, individuals in

a foreclosed status with ascribed options may rigidly follow dominant narratives that delineate implicit rules such as “I must go into the family business” or “My parents know which career is best for me.” Individuals in a moratorium status may follow dissociative narratives formed by implicit rules that exclude important aspects of experience or hold them in an unassimilated form such as “I’ll take whatever job comes along” (dissociating responsibility) or “I’ll worry about it when the time comes to choose a job” (dissociating anxiety). When problematic implicit rules organize clients’ careers, the narratives become self-perpetuating and each occurrence that reinforces the problematic pattern makes it more rigid and consequential (Cardoso, 2012; Dimaggio, 2006; Hermans & Hermans-Jansen, 1995; Oliveira, Gonçalves, Braga, & Ribeiro, 2016; Ribeiro et al., 2014). Finally, individuals in a diffused status may display disorganized narratives with incoherent and invalidating rules that fragment their ability to think systematically about occupational choices and organize career moves. These clients take impulsive action and make chaotic career moves such as drifting, floundering, or stagnating. This lack of coherence could lead to rationalizations such as “I should trust the moment and be spontaneous,” “You must seize the day,” or “A life constricted is a life that is not worth living.” Through dominance, dissociation, or disorganization, narratives may lose their ability to organize new vocational experiences in meaningful ways and might provoke feelings of dependency, demoralization, or despair.

Problems in narrative organization of experiences may cause career decision-making difficulties. For example, some clients may be aware of their needs yet be unable to construct realistic career plans to fulfill them because their beliefs delay or distort career decision-making (Cardoso, 2012). Other clients may be unable to articulate life themes with which to develop a continuous and coherent career narrative that sustains an envisioned future (Cochran, 1997). Repetitive dominant, dissociative, and disorganized narratives also contribute to clients making unrealistic career decisions that prolong a problematic life theme (Cardoso, 2012).

Innovative Moments and Construction of Change

According to the IMM (Gonçalves et al., 2017), clients’ construction of change evolves as they produce innovative moments (IMs) that destabilize problematic self-narratives; elaborate their meaning; and consolidate them into new, larger narratives through the counseling dialogues. To reorganize narrative disruptions, one must recognize exceptions to the former organization (i.e., IMs), particularly exceptions that reconstruct the narrative to address concerns in a meaningful, flexible, and integrated way. The IMM conceptualizes these exceptions as constructive moves in meaning that open new perspectives and possibilities for narrative reconstruction. Thus, IMs are pavers in the path of change during counseling dialogues when clients challenge problematic self-narratives by introducing novelties into problematic habitual ways of thinking, feeling, and behaving. Based on analysis of therapeutic interactions (Gonçalves et al., 2017), the IMM (Gonçalves et al., 2009; Gonçalves, Ribeiro, Mendes, Matos, & Santos, 2011) conceptualizes these novelties as falling into three categories at progressively higher developmental levels as seen in Table 1.

TABLE 1
Examples of Innovative Moments (IMs)

IM Level and Subtype	Definition	Example
Level 1		
Action 1	Performed and intended actions to overcome the problem	<i>Client:</i> This weekend I was able to talk to my husband about the possibility of leaving my job.
Reflection 1	New understandings of the problem	<i>Client:</i> I realized that changing my job wouldn't necessarily leave my family in a helpless situation.
Protest 1	Objecting to the problem and its assumptions	<i>Client:</i> I've had enough of worrying about the others. What about my life, my plans, where do they fit?
Level 2		
Action 2	Generalization into the future and other life dimensions of good outcomes (performed or projected actions)	<i>Career Counselor:</i> The implementation of the new career plans is changing your way of living?
Reflection 2	Contrasting the self (what changed?) or transformation process (how/why change occurred?)	<i>Client:</i> Yes, yes. I am starting to see that I can't forget about myself, not only at work but also in other dimensions of my own life. Before I just did try to answer to everybody's needs but now I am making time to do things that I really enjoy, that actually make me feel alive. <i>Client:</i> Yes, these sessions have helped me to see my indecision otherwise. That makes me feel good, makes me believe that I will be able to solve the problem.
Protest 2	Assertiveness and empowerment	<i>Client:</i> Now it's time to fight for myself, for choosing what I feel is the best for me. I also want to be happy, feel fulfilled, just be me.
Level 3		
Reconceptualization	Metapositions where the self is repositioned outside the problematic experience and also understands the processes involved in this transformation	<i>Client:</i> Not knowing which direction to take, or which decisions and choices to make to find myself. . . . It made me feel confused, without peace. Now it's different. To know where we are, what we want and the career we want to embrace gives us peace and tranquility.

Note. Adapted from "How Do Self-Narratives Change During Psychotherapy? A Review of Innovative Moments Research," by A. Montesano, J. T. Oliveira, and M. M. Gonçalves, 2017, *Journal of Systemic Therapies*, 36 (pp. 86–87). Copyright 2017 by Guilford Press. Adapted with permission of Guilford Press. Level 1 = creating distance from the problem; Level 2 = centered on the change; Level 3 = consolidating change.

Level 1 IMs

Level 1 IMs move clients to change by fostering (a) differentiation from the problematic pattern through the performance of specific actions (Action 1 IMs), (b) new understandings of the problem (Reflection 1 IMs), or (c) criticism of the problem or people who support the problem (Protest 1 IMs).

Level 2 IMs

Level 2 IMs refer to narrative elaborations focused on the change process. These IMs emerge in two typical forms: contrast and process. Through contrasts, clients recognize differences between the problematic past and a more adaptive present (e.g., “before I was/felt/did *X*; now I am/feel/do *Y*”). When process emerges, clients describe what was responsible for change (e.g., “I’m more flexible in my choices”). Contrast and process occur when clients articulate the strategies they implemented to overcome the problem (Reflection 2 IMs), move to new positions that express assertiveness and empowerment (Protest 2 IMs), and anticipate new activities or plan projects (Action 2 IMs).

Level 3 IMs

Level 3 IMs (also termed reconceptualization) emerge when both contrast and process are present in an articulated form, facilitating the consolidation of change (Gonçalves & Ribeiro, 2012). Level 3 IMs require a metaperspective from which a client takes an observing position to recognize the difference between the old and new plots (i.e., contrast) as well as comprehend the process of change (e.g., “Before I felt oppressed by the need to make perfect choices; now I understand that this was impossible. I was pressuring myself beyond what was reasonable, and I now accept that good decisions are enough. Besides I don’t need to be perfect, just do my best. In summary, I learned to be more flexible”). Level 3 IMs connect other IMs that emerged previously and enable a client to author a coherent and complex organization (Gonçalves & Ribeiro, 2012), one closer in form to a life narrative. A distinction proposed by Sarbin (1986) that is worth noting here is that understanding the process of change and how it has developed enables a client to be the author of the new narrative, not just an actor in it.

Ambivalence

In comprehending the process of change, the IMM also proposes that the emergence of ambivalence often inhibits change. Ambivalence may become apparent when IMs emerge yet are quickly negated or trivialized (Ribeiro & Gonçalves, 2010). Ambivalence may also present when a client holds, at the same time, two opposing positions, one favoring change and the other favoring stability. In either form, ambivalence signals feelings of uncertainty and anxiety elicited by change (Gonçalves et al., 2017). In confronting a problematic narrative about career, IMs challenge self-stability and evoke hesitation to temporarily avoid discontinuity and inconsistency in self-representations (Mahoney, 1991; Ribeiro, Gonçalves, Silva, Brás, & Sousa, 2016). For example, a client might say, “I know that I really want to be an engineer, but I’m too lazy to study hard.” Ambivalence occurs in most CCC cases, yet, at the end of counseling, clients should show significantly less ambivalence. Ribeiro et al. (2016) concluded that ambivalence resolution may be critical for a progressive and effective integration and consolidation of an emerging self-narrative.

Research on IMs in CCC

Cardoso and his colleagues (Cardoso et al., 2014a, 2014b, 2016) have intensively analyzed CCC sessions, tracking IMs and ambivalence markers, to understand how client change occurred during CCC. The analysis

of cases was guided by the conception of theory-building case studies (Stiles, 2007). Stiles (2007) suggested that, in contrast to studies on samples, case studies may be used to construct general theory by allowing in-depth study of the particularities of each case. If a diversity of cases fit a particular theory, then our confidence in the theory increases. If a case challenges a theory, opportunity arises to adjust, revise, or reject it.

Two of the cases analyzed by Cardoso and colleagues involved clients included in CCC training DVDs (Savickas, 2009). Ryan was an employed adult finding career alternatives compatible with his skills and interests, and Michael was a college student undecided and sad about a school-to-work transition. Vanda (a fictitious name), in the third case study, was a high school student requesting help in deciding on higher education (Cardoso et al., 2016). This case was selected for being in a different career moment from those previously analyzed and, thus, allowing new information on change process. Moreover, Michael, contrarily to Ryan and Vanda, revealed a career narrative saturated with themes of sadness and insecurity, suggesting that this case fit the dysfunction of a dominant narrative. On the basis of clients' feedback (DVD cases) and pre- and posttest assessment (high school student), all cases were evaluated as good outcomes. The findings from these cases were published previously (Cardoso et al., 2014a, 2014b, 2016), and here we highlight their main commonalities, as well some minor, but important, differences.

Generally, findings from the Innovative Moments Coding System and the Ambivalence Marker Coding System (see Table 2) showed a pattern of narrative innovation characterized by a gradual increase in the proportion of IMs similar to that observed in research on psychotherapy (Alves, Mendes, Gonçalves, & Neimeyer, 2012; Matos, Santos, Gonçalves, & Martins, 2009; Mendes et al., 2010). The findings suggest that the occurrence of IMs leads to the transformation of a client's career

TABLE 2

**Proportion of Time in Career Construction Counseling Sessions
Related to Innovative Moments (IMs) and Ambivalence**

Case Study and IM Level	Session 1	Session 2	Session 3
Michael			
Level 1	2.1	4.1	5.8
Level 2	0.0	3.4	10.2
Total	2.1	7.5	16.0
Ambivalence	0.0	25.0	12.0
Ryan			
Level 1	8.1	14.4	17.5
Level 2	0.4	14.1	16.8
Total	8.5	28.5	34.3
Ambivalence	0.0	1.9	1.8
Vanda			
Level 1	9.8	25.0	25.8
Level 2	2.7	0.9	28.7
Level 3	0.0	0.0	9.8
Total	12.5	25.9	64.3
Ambivalence	2.2	1.2	2.3

Note. Level 1 = creating distance from the problem; Level 2 = centered on the change; Level 3 = consolidating change.

narrative. The evolution of this transformation throughout CCC phases begins with initial cycles of Level 1 IMs, in which there were a greater proportion of Reflection 1 IMs. Also present, yet in lesser proportion, were Action 1 and Protest 1 IMs. The occurrence of Level 1 IMs supports the elaboration of Level 2 IMs during Phase II. In this more complex type of narrative elaboration, Reflection 2 IMs predominate, with Protest 2 and Action 2 IMs occurring to a lesser extent. Level 3 IMs occurred only at the end of Phase III when client and counselor retrospectively reflected on the process of change. In summary, transformation evolves through a pattern of gradual movement from Level 1 to Level 2 and then to Level 3 IMs, across the three phases in the CCC model.

In all the cases studied, client transformation through CCC followed the goals and tasks of each phase. In Phase I, clients formulate career problems, distance themselves from their problems, and discuss micronarratives to understand their career constructs. During Phase II, narrative elaboration focuses on client change through reconstructing a macronarrative or broad story of career that shifts perspective, deepens understanding of career difficulties, identifies life themes, reorganizes self-representations, and prompts planning. In the third and final phase, counselors continue to support the elaboration of realistic career plans grounded on the reconstructed career narrative, review actions taken to perform change, and reinforce client transformation through reconceptualization. CCC closes when clients refine their new career plans, state that they have achieved the goals they set at the beginning of counseling, and prepare to take further actions to implement the plans.

Of course, attention to CCC tasks need not follow a linear sequence. Indeed, ambivalence toward change occurred in the three cases intensively analyzed. In two of these cases, in which there was no dominant problematic narrative, ambivalence was not an issue (Cardoso et al., 2014b, 2016). However, from our results, it seemed that Michael (Cardoso et al., 2014a) had a self-narrative marked by dominance (as sadness and insecurity were present and making career choices harder) and had more difficulties than the others with ambivalence. Such findings coincide with the idea that rigid and repetitive problematic narratives tend to be associated with more ambivalence toward change because narrative novelty introduces discrepancies or internal contradictions in the career narratives, prompting a need to preserve self-stability by blocking narrative innovation. In contrast, the emergence of IMs does not prompt great discrepancy in clients with more flexible career narratives. They show less ambivalence toward change and are more open to narrative novelty (Oliveira et al., 2016). In summary, the three cases studied (Cardoso et al., 2014a, 2014b, 2016) each followed a pattern of change characterized by a gradual increase in the proportion of IMs.

Proposal for a Sequence of Client Change During CCC

Our analysis let us form a proposal about a general progression in CCC by (a) the consistent findings across the three previously published cases, each with different career problems (Cardoso et al., 2014a, 2014b, 2016); (b) the case studies in a research project on career construction dialogues (Savickas, 2016); and (c) our own experience as counselors. Accordingly, we propose that the sequence of client change throughout CCC follows a progression through the three phases of career construc-

tion tasks in parallel with the three levels of innovative dialogue, as depicted in Figure 1.

In Phase I, Level 1 IMs (Action 1, Reflection 1, and Protest 1) predominate as counselors identify a client's career problems and then collect micronarratives using the CCI. The three tasks of Phase I include formulating the career problem, distancing oneself from the problem, and deepening understanding of the career constructs in the micronarratives. During Phase II, Level 2 IMs (Reflection 2, Protest 2, and Action 2) predominate as client and counselor discuss and revise the macronarrative or career story. The major tasks for Phase II involve reconstructing the career story, moving to a new perspective to envision possibilities, and making career plans. During Phase III, Level 3 IMs take hold as client and counselor discuss the actions taken in service of change and solidify the reconstructed narrative.

We illustrate our proposal of a systematic sequence of client change across the three CCC phases with vignettes from the three previously described cases: Michael (Cardoso et al., 2014a), Ryan (Cardoso et al., 2014b), and Vanda (Cardoso et al., 2016). We also selected two vignettes from the cases of Maria (Cardoso, 2012) and Sofia (Cardoso & Sales, 2019), because, although they are not intensively analyzed from the IMs perspective, they fit our proposal and can illustrate more clearly the sequence of client change during CCC.

Phase I Change

As we have noted, the three main tasks of Phase I are formulating the problem, distancing from the problem, and understanding the career constructs in the micronarratives.

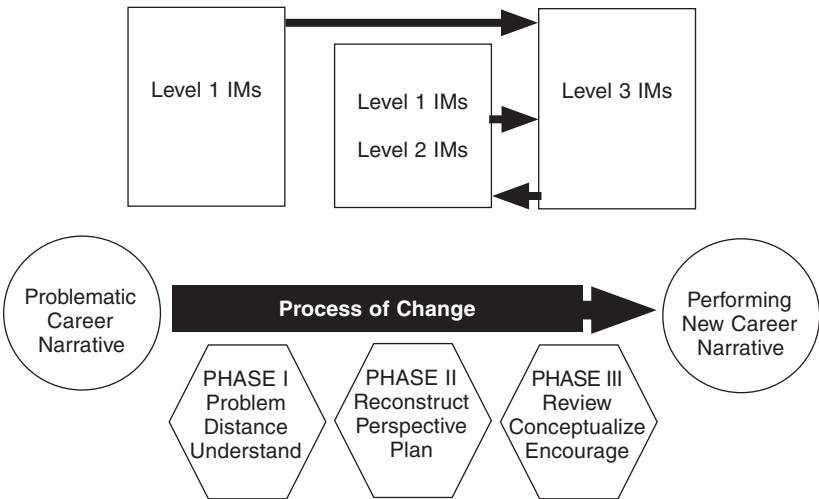


FIGURE 1
Narrative Innovation and Tasks in the Construction of Career Change

Note. IMs = innovative moments; Level 1 = creating distance from the problem; Level 2 = centered on the change; Level 3 = consolidating change.

Formulating the career problem, the first novel moment in client change, begins with a transition story that describes the disruption and difficulties caused by a vocational development task, occupational transition, or work trauma. The problem formulation should fully elaborate yet shape a concise statement of the problems to be addressed during the intervention. Counselors initiate problem formulation by asking, “How can I be useful to you as you construct your career?” Frequently, the answer is vague (e.g., “I came here to take tests” or “I would like to know which direction should I follow”) and avoids mention of other related problems. Difficulties in problem formulation are also revealed when a client proposes an objective for the intervention yet is unable to express the difficulties hindering the achievement of that objective. Problem formulation is achieved when client and counselor agree on clear definitions and differentiation of career problems. The dynamic and flexible nature of change may, in due course, lead to the formulation of new career problems.

During the dialogue concerning problem clarification, Level 1 IMs emerge, especially Reflection 1 IMs that express clients’ first attempts to understand the problem. The words of Ryan illustrate this when he talked about his difficulties integrating himself into the work setting: “That’s what I’m talking about, what’s it like putting a piece of you into something that . . . it will leave a lasting effect for the person that you’re doing it for” (Reflection 1). As clients begin to more fully understand problem causes and consequences, Protest 1 IMs may emerge. Although usually in lower proportion, Protest 1 IMs articulate the first critical positions in relation to the problem or the people who support it. For example, Ryan said the following:

Right, exactly, and I can’t help it. And then they don’t like when you talk and it’s like, hey, I get my work done, you know, I do my job. I’ve, you know, I’ve worked my way up fairly quickly. (Protest 1)

Action 1 IMs may also occur during the first phase when clients talk about past behaviors enacted to address the problem. Specific actions to counter the problem include exploring different contexts, seeking information, searching for solutions, and trying new coping behaviors.

Having articulated the problem to be solved allows a client to begin distancing from the problem. Ricoeur (1981) proposed the term *distanciation* to denote the process of giving up a current narrative about a situation to make room for a new narrative and way of experiencing events. The process of viewing the career situation from a self-distanced perspective, increasing gradually as the intervention evolves, has the potential to allow clients to work through their experiences and gain insight as well as reach closure on negative experiences (e.g., as reported in early recollections). Furthermore, distancing enables clients to reconstruct and derive meaning from the CCI micronarratives, rather than simply recall details about what occurred. Most important, distancing enables clients to adopt an agentic position in which they are better able to act on the career problem.

Understanding of the career constructs develops from dialogues about the micronarratives evoked by questions in the CCI. These dialogues provide the first opportunity for clients to examine their vocational interests

and career goals as well as perceptions of barriers and limitations. This examination typically leads to Reflection 1 IMs, as exemplified in Vanda's words: "Marine biology, which is something I like a lot. Because I like sea animals a lot, it's something I like a lot" (Reflection 1). As clients deepen understanding of their career constructs, they begin to take a new and broader perspective on their career problems. Higher level IMs begin to emerge, especially Reflection 2 IMs related to the first expressions of an emerging new identity prefiguring the next moment of change.

Phase II Change

The major tasks of Phase II are reconstructing a career portrait/career macronarrative, moving to a new perspective, and making career plans. Reconstructing a career portrait follows the deepening of understanding of the career constructs in the micronarratives. It reorganizes the vocational stories in the narrow micronarratives into one broad career macronarrative with a clear theme. The reconstruction of a continuous and coherent career narrative produces a new vocational identity and suggests the next career scenario. An even greater increase in the proportion of Reflection 1 IMs occurs while exploring the meaning of a macronarrative. These dialogues prompt clients to reflect on the career problem over time and in different contexts of psychosocial functioning. Reflection revises the meaning of past vocational experiences and fosters new ways of thinking, feeling, and understanding the problem that enable clients to defy its demands. Consider Ryan's reflection on being in the military:

And it was great. Best time of my life. I saw the world and I mean, like the people I worked with, they stood by [you] no matter what, through hard times through, you know, the goods and bads, they're there for you. (Reflection 1)

Reflection is also used to promote narrative coherence, as expressed in the words of Vanda linking interests to needs (e.g., "I liked, for instance, biology and such . . . I would like to be like my role models, who are persistent and follow their dreams" [Reflection 1]). Additional expressions of Reflection 1 IMs emerge, such as intentions to fight the problem (e.g., Vanda's statement that "I got to work for it" [Reflection 1]). These reflections may prompt new problem formulations. For example, Ryan said this:

I'm a little scared because that's the whole thing. There's a loophole there's a loophole like I said. Everyone has a loophole. However, it's the fear of, you know, going to the trouble and then being disappointed, and that hurts. (Reflection 1)

Similarly, Michael said, "Just it's like getting to do it like because I'm depressed I don't want to" (Reflection 1).

Increasing distance from the problem also occurs occasionally in Protest 1 IMs, as illustrated when Sofia expressed a critical position toward her passive side, preventing her assertiveness with coworkers:

Sofia: I'm sick of not saying no.

Counselor: Yeah, sick of feeling abused.

Sofia: Yes, I'm sick of being the nice person. (Protest 1)

Reconstructing a career portrait is also furthered by Protest 2 IMs, including expressions of assertiveness and empowerment that support the emerging new self-representation, as revealed in Michael's words (e.g., "I'm not an accountant. I'm not an investment banker, I'm not an engineer, right?" [Protest 2]). Level 1 IMs continue to occur, yet now they are in the service of the new self-representations. The process is illustrated in the following vignette in which Ryan refers to his image at work as that of a "male" who works only with the hands. However, for him, as we will see, before the "male" comes a whole person, his wholeness.

Ryan: Has to come together before the male.

Counselor: Yeah. So this is why when you go to work, you don't feel like your whole person is there. I mean all of you.

Ryan: Right, right. (Reflection 1)

The new self-positions are accompanied by references to adaptive thoughts and feelings of well-being as consequences of change (Reflection 2 IMs). Showing the gradual transition from a moment to the other moment, the new career narrative also prompts the first attempts to articulate a future scenario:

Ryan: Broadcast, I mean journalism. I like, I mean I could write. And then I'm that guy, you know producing ESPN maybe, who knows, produce you know weather segment, produce or you know. It's kind of like putting my thoughts, maybe my thoughts on paper and having someone else say them or read them off like ESPN guys do, or like weathermen, or you know broadcasters. . . . I could bring, you know, my management and my . . .

Counselor: Sensitivity.

Ryan: Sensitivity and my creativeness together and what is it? (Reflection 2)

The increasing focus on the future allows a comprehensive self-representation and introduces the next moment. Making career plans resolves prior restrictions with a sense of purpose that both consolidates and elaborates new possibilities for career construction. Reflection 2 IMs occur in higher proportion, particularly related to the emergence of new self-constructions that bring feelings of well-being and self-worth resulting from the changes achieved. The presence of Reflection 2 IMs supports the role of a revised vocational identity and new career narrative in formulating plans.

Protest 2 IMs also occur when clients affirm career plans and assume positions of assertiveness that enable them to engage with the problem from a different vantage point. For example, Michael produced a Protest 2 IM when he said, "Why would I bother? That's my life, you know."

Action 2 IMs result from references to new career plans and efforts to implement these plans. For example, Vanda referred to the intention of studying abroad, stemming from the definition of career goals: "It was . . . something I always wanted, to study abroad. . . . An experi-

ence for a few months, to stay there for a few months, even if I had to work” (Action 2).

Phase III Change

The three tasks of Phase III involve reviewing actions intended to initiate change, conceptualizing the transformation, and encouraging further action. The life-designing dialogue begins by reviewing initial outcomes from engaging in new activities and projects as a result of the change process (Action 2 IMs) as well as the responses of their audiences to these performance. If a new direction is required, this is discussed. The second task of Phase III consists of conceptualizing the transformation. It was proposed that Level 3 IMs serve four functions (Gonçalves & Ribeiro, 2012): (a) creating a continuity between the past and present, (b) replacing some passive acceptance in the past with a sense of active mastery in the present, (c) easing commitment to the revised narrative, and (d) resolving ambivalence through a metaposition that supersedes contrary positions that have alternatively dominated and recurrently challenged each other.

Level 3 IMs have clients consider what is different about themselves and the process that fostered this transformation. Counselors encourage Level 3 IMs by asking clients to describe how they dealt with the career problem formulated at the beginning of CCC. Helping a client to narrate what has changed and how such changes have been achieved is a way of expanding the narrative coherence and continuity achieved during the second phase of intervention and promoting, in this third phase, the personal agency needed to mobilize clients to deal with the challenges of career plans (Gonçalves & Ribeiro, 2012). In the following quotation, Maria describes how she sustained change (Cardoso, 2012):

Counselor: Did you come to a new understanding of yourself through the notes? What did you learn from them?

Maria: There was some structuring, as if the story of my life had become coherent. That kind of structuring is very good because it helps me to get rid of my ambivalent feelings. As if things were organized . . . I felt I had a way out, a life project.

Pursuing narrative elaboration on the process of change, Maria expressed personal agency in her recently rebuilt capacity to make decisions:

Counselor: Does that help you find your way?

Maria: Exactly . . . and to make decisions. (Level 3 IMs)

The importance of counselors actively encouraging Level 3 IMs is justified by three research studies. Meira, Gonçalves, Salgado, and Cunha (2009) studied the role of Level 3 IMs in daily change. They reported that participants described Level 3 IMs only when prompted to do so by the interviewer. This finding suggests that clients may achieve Level 3 IMs yet not report doing so without queries from the counselor. Meira and colleagues indicated that the same prompts did not produce Level 3 IMs with participants who showed a reduced level of change. Consistent with the report by Meira and colleagues, two studies of ca-

reer counseling with good outcomes (Cardoso, 2012; Cardoso et al., 2016) reported that clients were able to elaborate Level 3 IMs when the counselor asked them about changes achieved and the processes underlying the transformation.

Limitations and Future Research

The main factor limiting support of our proposed sequence of clients' narrative transformation during CCC is its base in only three cases. Refinement of our proposed integration of the CCC and IMs models will benefit from more studies of cases with diverse outcomes to test and further elaborate the pattern described herein. In this sense, one path could be to follow up these findings with other qualitative results—for example, to collect data from the perspective of clients on how they have changed and compare this with the IMM. It would also be useful to research ways to deal with ambivalence, studying whether career counselors should give space for the position that favors stability, as research on motivational interviewing (Miller & Rollnick, 2002) has demonstrated. Finally, the role of Level 3 IMs (or reconceptualization) on sustaining change over time should be studied, as these IMs represent a deeper narrative change.

Implications for Practice

The sequence of client change described herein also has at least two implications for practice. First, counselors may pay attention to IM markers in formulating interventions relevant to a client's level of narrative change. For example, helping the client differentiate self-experience and deepen its understanding (Reflection 1 IMs) should precede conversations favoring the reconstruction of a career macronarrative, that is, the integration of life episodes/experiences into a continuous and coherent career narrative (Level 2 IMs). This way, counselors avoid facing clients with counseling tasks for which they are not prepared. Second, IMs may be used as markers for evoking and expanding change. Whenever an IM arises, a counselor may evoke dialogues inviting the client to stay with and explore the IM to expand the emergent narrative novelty. These two practical implications suggest the need for research and reflection to examine the types of CCC dialogues that facilitate evoking and expanding IMs in career counseling.

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