Integrating Life-Design Counseling and Psychotherapy: Possibilities and Practices

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The debate on the relationship between career counseling and psychotherapy revealed the close relationship between psychosocial and career issues. The connection between these 2 approaches paves the way for the integration of career counseling into psychotherapy. In this article, the Systematic Treatment Selection (Beutler & Clarkin, 1990) perspective in psychotherapy is presented as a framework for guiding career counseling integration into psychotherapy. Then, the author describes life-design counseling, underlining its possibilities for integration with psychotherapeutic practices. Finally, the author presents and discusses a case study to illustrate the complexity of this integrative process.

Keywords: career construction counseling, integration, life design, psychotherapy

The relationship between career counseling and psychotherapy is not a new subject (McIlveen, 2015). The debate on this relationship (Subich, 1993) allows the affirmation of career counseling as a dimension of personal counseling and recognizes the close relationship between psychosocial and career issues (Blustein & Spengler, 1995; McIlveen, 2015). The connection between these two approaches paves the way for the integration of career counseling with psychotherapy. Indeed, the inseparability of mental health and career issues frequently leads psychotherapists to help their clients to deal with work satisfaction, underemployment, or unemployment through psychotherapy. Moreover, when working with specific populations, such as people with intellectual disabilities and people with addiction or mental health problems, psychotherapy calls for integration with career counseling to consolidate and enhance therapeutic gains (Blustein, 1987; Jordan & Kahnweiler, 1995; Leff & Warner, 2006).

Recognizing the links between career counseling and psychotherapy, this article primarily aims to present the Systematic Treatment Selection (STS; Beutler & Clarkin, 1990) perspective as a framework for an effective integration of psychotherapy and career counseling. The perspective of career counseling and psychotherapy integration presented here is grounded in a view of integration that is best described as a process of "informed differentiation" (Vasco, 2001, p. 220), which implies the sequential or complementary use of assessment tools, concepts, and

interventions from different theoretical orientations (and worldviews) to capture the complexities and maximize the efficacy of therapeutic interventions (Vasco, 2001). First, I present the STS framework. Then, I describe life design in the form of career construction counseling (Savickas, 2011), underlining its possibilities for integration with psychotherapeutic practices. Finally, I present and discuss a case study to illustrate the complexity of this integrative process.

STS: Fitting Career Counseling to Client Characteristics

The STS framework is a technical eclectic approach designed to tailor treatment to client needs. It allows indicators from identifiable client and environmental characteristics to be used by counselors to guide treatment selection, regardless of their theoretical perspectives (e.g., behavioral, cognitive, or psychodynamic). Individualizing treatment based on the client's needs is regarded as a process that takes into account four classes of temporally related variables: client variables, relationship variables, treatment context, and tailoring strategies and techniques (Beutler & Clarkin, 1990; Beutler, Consoli, & Lane, 2005).

Client Variables

Client variables include the client characteristics brought into treatment and provide indicators for matching the intervention techniques to the client. Research in psychotherapy suggests the relevance of the following client variables: problem severity, problem complexity, coping style, and levels of reactance (Beutler & Consoli, 2003). *Problem severity* is defined as impairment in the capacity of the client to tackle social, occupational, and interpersonal demands of daily life (Beutler & Consoli, 2003). When career counseling is integrated into psychotherapy, the assessment of problem severity is especially relevant, for example, to favor a client's transition to the labor market. This assessment facilitates the anticipation of barriers and supports career development and, therefore, is fundamental to planning the transition to the labor market.

Problem complexity is characterized by enduring repetitive patterns of behaviors that are intended to solve a problem, but often result in suffering. In a narrative framework, problem complexity is expressed by a redundant self-narrative and, consequently, rigidity in coping or adjusting to new experiences. That is, individuals are prisoners of redundant constructions of their experiences and, therefore, are incapable of using alternative ways of coping and adjusting to novelty (Cardoso, 2012). Research on career counseling processes suggests that intervention is less effective when addressing complex problems (Stauffer, Perdrix, Masdonati, Massoudi, & Rossier, 2013), should be conducted for a longer period of time (Heppner & Hendricks, 1995; Janeiro, Mota, & Ribas, 2014), and should be performed using the most supportive style of career counseling (Anderson & Niles, 2000; Rochlen, Milburn, & Hill, 2004). In these cases, it is imperative to help clients integrate career difficulties in the matrix of the core themes that organize their experiences. This support facilitates problem comprehension by reconsidering the roots of the problem and understanding the role of career plans in addressing psychosocial problems.

Closely related to problem complexity, *coping style* refers to patterns of defenses used to preserve a sense of self and maintain internal consistency (Beutler & Clarkin, 1990). The assessment of the role of coping styles in career difficulties is critical to fitting career counseling tasks to client needs (Janeiro et al., 2014). As far as career counseling is concerned, the difficulties in recognizing interests, aptitudes, or values could be related to an internalizing coping style, in which the client limits contact with internal experiences. In these cases, research in psychotherapy suggests the importance of using career counseling procedures that foster emotional arousal to facilitate vocational self-concept clarification (Beutler & Consoli, 2003). These procedures are also regarded as complementing psychotherapeutic support to overcome the limitations of an internalizing coping style.

Reactance is conceptualized as client noncompliance resulting from the failure to fit the intervention to client characteristics (Beutler, Harwood, Michaelson, Song, & Holman, 2011). A feature of reactant clients is their sensitivity to being controlled by others and, consequently, their resistance to directive practices (Beutler & Harwood, 2000). Reactant clients are more likely to resist career counseling to avoid the responsibilities of career decision making (Gysbers, Heppner, & Johnston, 2009) or directive practices, such as educational tasks (e.g., giving information) and recommendations for career exploration between sessions.

Relationship Variables

Relationship variables contribute the most to enhancing the working alliance. Among these variables, client and counselor demographic characteristics (e.g., age, gender, ethnicity, social and cultural background), interpersonal response patterns, expectations, and beliefs are regarded as key because of their importance in promoting client–counselor compatibility (Beutler & Clarkin, 1990). Psychotherapy research suggests that demographic similarities between the client and counselor strengthen the working alliance—an effect particularly relevant among disadvantaged populations (Beutler & Consoli, 2003). These findings are consistent with the vocational psychology literature suggesting that counselors should be culturally competent to adapt their practices to the clients' experiences and develop the proximity needed for a successful counseling relationship (Fouad & Kantamneni, 2013). Among demographic client characteristics, age has proven to be an important variable in career counseling effectiveness. In fact, research has revealed that intervention is more effective with younger clients (Perdrix, Stauffer, Masdonati, Massoudi, & Rossier, 2012; Stauffer et al., 2013).

Interpersonal response patterns express the client's needs for attachment and affiliation, which range in a continuum from the individuals who desire affiliation, dependency, relatedness, and recognition to the individuals striving for distinction and autonomy from others (Beutler & Consoli, 2003). When career counseling is integrated into psychotherapy, the counselor must be attentive to the clients' interpersonal patterns to ensure the continuity of psychotherapeutic work in the career counseling tasks. For example, with a dependent client, it is important to encourage autonomy in solving career problems and resist subtle client requests to be told what to do or what to decide.

The compatibility between counselor and client beliefs and expectations is also crucial to strengthening the working alliance. Research in psychotherapy (Bordin, 1979; Horvath, 2005) and career counseling (Masdonati, Perdrix, Massoudi, & Rossier, 2013; Tinsley, Tokar, & Helwig, 1994) has suggested that the counselor and client should agree on intervention goals and tasks to increase the level of involvement and counseling effectiveness. Typically, clients expect the use of psychological tests in career counseling and the counselor's advice on the right career (Cardoso, Taveira, Biscaia, & Santos, 2012). These expectations do not fit practices emphasizing meaning making, such as career construction counseling. Therefore, it is appropriate to educate the client about career counseling goals and tasks to strengthen the working alliance, as well as integrate career counseling within the context of psychotherapeutic intervention.

Treatment Context

The treatment context variable includes setting, mode (psychosocial or medical), format (individual, group, or family), frequency, and duration of the intervention. As a rule, career counseling practices integrated into psychotherapeutic interventions should occur in the same context to ensure their continuity and consistency. However, client characteristics and the level of change can benefit from changing the treatment context. For example, as a client progresses in treatment, the advantage of a multiperson intervention may become clear (Beutler & Harwood, 2000). Thus, individuals who are especially dependent upon family support, such as adolescents and persons with disabilities, may benefit from a family intervention format. Furthermore, the integration of career counseling into the closing phase of psychotherapy, aimed at facilitating clients' social and occupational inclusion, may involve the establishment of a social network to support the implementation of career goals and to strengthen the therapeutic gains that are linked to autonomy and client social inclusion.

Strategies and Techniques

The final challenge of fitting treatment to client needs within an STS framework is to progressively adapt the intervention to client changes. To this end, it is important to modify the mediating goals of the therapeutic process according to changes in client variables, such as coping style or problem complexity (Beutler et al., 2005). In this sense, the perspectives of Beitman (1987) on the stages of psychotherapy evolution (relationship enhancement, pattern identification, change efforts, and termination planning) and of Prochaska and DiClemente (2003) on the stages of motivation to change evolution (i.e., precontemplation, contemplation, action, and maintenance) constitute the conceptual matrix that counselors might use to guide the integration of career goals throughout the psychotherapeutic process. From this perspective, career counseling goals can be conceptualized as mediating goals of the psychotherapeutic process and, thereby, must also adjust to client change to ensure consistency and continuity of the therapeutic process. For example, in the early phases of psychotherapy, career counseling strategies and techniques favor the process of self-exploration and the search of life themes and, consequently, enhance goal achievements in

both the pattern identification phase (Beitman, 1987) and contemplation phase (Prochaska & DiClemente, 2003). As psychotherapy progresses, supporting the transition to the labor market facilitates clients' interpersonal change in a way that fits the goals of the change efforts phase (Beitman, 1987) and action phase (Prochaska & DiClemente, 2003).

Life Design and Career Construction Counseling

Life-design counseling may be viewed as the application of career construction theory (CCT; Savickas, 2013) to career counseling. Subscribing to the epistemology of social constructionism, CCT gives a central role to the narrative mode in explaining vocational behavior and development, as well as in fostering career construction. From this perspective, career is the macronarrative about an individual's path that involves multiple roles throughout the life span (Savickas, 2002). The macronarrative/ life story is organized around life themes that constitute the "problem or set of problems that a person wishes to solve above everything else and the means the person finds to achieve the solution" (Csikszetmihalyi & Beattie, 1979, p. 48).

Life design via career construction counseling aims to help clients reauthor their narrative identities and project new possibilities of self-construction in career roles. The process involves helping clients connect life themes to career plans. Because life themes are formed by relationships among needs, interests, and goals, the counselor helps the client to understand how early needs (the past) lead to the construction of aspirations (the future) that might meet those past needs. In addition, clients are supported by understanding how their interests (the present) are instruments used to meet their goals and, thereby, satisfy their needs (Savickas, 1995).

Career construction counseling begins with a Career Construction Interview (CCI; Savickas, 2011). The CCI is a semistructured interview in which a practitioner inquires about five topics that form life themes and inform decision making about the current transition. The topics are: (a) role models for self-construction; (b) magazines, television shows, or websites for manifest interests; (c) a favorite story from a book or movie forming the script for the next episode; (d) sayings or mottos for advice to self; and (e) early recollections for perspective on the present problem or transition. From the answers obtained, it is possible, through a process of self-exploration, to help an individual construct a narrative that expresses the central problem of his or her life, proposes resolutions in the form of goals, and plots methods to achieve these goals.

Life Design and Psychotherapy: Integrative Possibilities

Two core ideas of the life-design framework and career construction counseling facilitate their integration into psychotherapy. The first is the emphasis on the individual as a constructor of contextual meanings and, consequently, the singularity of each individual. This positioning favors the use of qualitative assessment to encourage clients to uncover their subjective careers and life themes (McMahon & Patton, 2002). This modality of assessment has the advantage of not putting the counselor in the role of the expert who provides problem diagnostics through

psychological testing, but instead maintains the emphasis on the counseling relationship. The counselor assumes a participatory attitude in the client's experience, aiding the free expression of subjective experience, exploring emergent representations, and constructing new meanings. Moreover, qualitative assessment can overcome the difficulty of adapting standardized methodologies (e.g., content and norms) to sociocultural diversity. Therefore, it fits easily to the needs of the clients, regardless of their cultural, ethnic, socioeconomic, and health conditions (Duarte & Rossier, 2008; Goldman, 1990).

The second idea relates to the concept of life themes. This concept is present in counseling and psychotherapy approaches that consider thematic cores to explain how individuals organize their self-experience. Examples of these approaches include the concepts of irrational beliefs in rational-emotive therapy (Ellis, 1962), cognitive schema in schema therapy (Young, Klosko, & Weishaar, 2003), and core conflictual relationships themes in psychoanalytic psychotherapy (Luborsky, 1984). This conceptual continuity between life design and other approaches in psychotherapy allows continuity and consistency between career counseling and the practice of psychotherapy into which it is integrated. That is, the identification of life themes in career counseling is more likely to reinforce clients' awareness of the core themes underlying their personal problems and, thereby, place career construction as a dimension of self-construction (Savickas, 2015). In the next section, I present an emotion-focused psychotherapeutic process (Greenberg, 2002) that integrates life design to illustrate both this process of integration and the usefulness of the narrative approaches to career development.

Case Illustration

Counselor

The counselor (the author) was a 45-year-old White man with 3 years of postgraduate study in psychotherapy and 250 hours of supervised practice in psychotherapy. He also held a doctorate in vocational psychology and possessed more than 15 years of experience as a career counselor. His theoretical framework was mainly social constructionist.

Client

Ricardo (a pseudonym used to protect the client's identity) was a 17-year-old adolescent who lived with his parents and brother. A year before entering counseling, Ricardo's father, a mechanic, suffered a stroke that left him incapacitated and unable to work. Ricardo's mother was a school teacher; she was also attending university at the time Ricardo entered counseling to improve his professional situation. Ricardo regarded his mother as his key support and his father as a very detached person. Before the stroke, his father was a heavy drinker, which led to increased aggressiveness toward his wife and children.

Ricardo suffered from enuresis until he was 7 years old, and his school path was unsuccessful as a result of significant reading and writing difficulties. He reported that he never liked school or his teachers because "they bored me to death." Because of his academic difficulties, he was

guided toward a vocational education program in mechanics after the ninth grade of high school. However, frequent absences kept him from completing this educational program. Moreover, this situation was aggravated by frequent conflicts with his work supervisor. At the time he entered counseling, Ricardo worked for a restaurant delivering food to people's homes. For this purpose, he began a school program to obtain a driver's license. However, he did not attend the driving lessons because he felt that he did not really belong there. He stated that he thought the other students saw him as "a con artist." A strong and tall young man, Ricardo spoke with emotional detachment, used short sentences, avoided eye contact, and often used slanderous language. There was no indication of alcohol or drug abuse.

The Intervention

Ricardo initiated psychotherapy at the behest of his mother, who claimed not to know what else to do to save her son from what she described as marginal behavior, such as riding a motorcycle without a proper driving license, filling up his motorcycle without paying for the gas, and shoplifting mobile phones. He started his first counseling sessions in a very resistant manner: "I don't think that I'm crazy. I'm only here on behalf of my mother so I don't have problems at home with her." The first two sessions were aimed at improving his motivation for the helping process by building a therapeutic alliance, managing his resistance, and planning future therapeutic work. Gradually, he discussed the conflicts with his family and how they related to his frustrating school experiences and personal relationships with his friends. A contract was established for individual weekly sessions of 1 hour each to improve his conflict-management skills and increase his motivation to obtain a driving license.

From the fifth session onward, two central issues arose: his ambivalent feelings toward his father and the feeling that he was lost in life, describing himself as being disorganized and without a purpose in life. He repeatedly said: "Sometimes I think I am crazy. I just feel like wandering around, alone, on my motorcycle. My life sucks, it's pointless, I have no profession . . . don't want to continue looking after others."

During the sixth session, Ricardo revealed a tendency to avoid talking about his feelings toward his father. He seemed particularly distressed, and when the counselor empathically reflected that pain, he replied: "Yes, I don't want to talk about it. That is the past." Indeed, discussing this issue, at this stage, would have weakened the therapeutic relationship. Gradually, the session became more focused on his lack of life goals and on his feeling lost. Again, in this session, he said, with profound sadness: "I am lost, without any plans in life. I can't imagine myself holding a specific job; I don't know what I really want. There seems to be two of me, I would like to have goals but at the same time I don't really know if I truly want them." Ricardo managed to identify his goals, which were very short-term (to be able to buy a car, go to a gym, obtain his motorcycle and automobile driving licenses) and showed concern for the well-being of other parties (he would like to see his father get better and his brother get a job). Ricardo's narrative emerged fragmented from several conflicting voices. Part of him felt an intense hopelessness,

tired of overrated ephemeral pleasures, and predicted the absence of a legitimate future. Making money served his daily needs regardless of its source, hence the eventual return to criminal behaviors. Another part of him wished to build a better self, better relationships, and a life worth living. The counselor identified a tenuous voice longing for feasible goals and opportunities to flee the daunting maze.

At this point, the counselor felt the need to make a decision about Ricardo's therapeutic progress. Either Ricardo should start to make some emotional improvements, exploring his ambivalent feelings toward finding an occupational goal in life, or the counselor should help him to renew his self-image through a new self-construction as someone with plans and a particular life path, thereby helping him with his own sadness and discomfort (e.g., "I can't imagine myself in a specific profession, I don't know what I want"). Two factors seemed to support the latter choice. First, the therapeutic work on his own emotions had become too intense and had left Ricardo feeling very vulnerable, thus weakening the therapeutic alliance. Second, a renewed representation of himself as someone with goals and plans in life would allow him to experience new positive emotions that would improve the way he saw himself and the way he dealt with life in general and his career problems, in particular. Thus, the counselor began a CCI (Savickas, 2011). Ricardo's answers revealed that he admired firefighters and the police task force "for their courage and determination in helping others and for their relationship as a group." In his favorite book, *A Lua de Joana* [*Joan's Moon*], he was impressed by the strength of the main character. Ricardo mentioned his interest in motorcycle magazines, saying he likes motorcycles because they provide good opportunities for business. On television, Ricardo said he enjoyed Herman José (a popular talk show host), because Herman José is not afraid to speak his mind, likes his mother, and enjoys traveling. He indicated that his life motto is "When we die, we all go on our backs." From his childhood, he remembered his uncle's death, which made him realize that he had to stand up for his life. He also referred to having once protected his mother from domestic violence. Another episode he mentioned was an accident, revealing his irresponsibility.

Using Ricardo's responses to the CCI questions, the counselor formulated the following understanding about Ricardo. Early recollections suggested that he was aware of the fact that he must stand up for his life. One way of achieving it was to stand up for others, such as when he hit his father to protect his mother. When he does not stand up for life, he feels irresponsible and suffers greatly—feeling like a misfit. His proposed solution was found in admired figures who, within a group, model courage and willpower, helping others and keeping them safe, thereby earning the admiration of the community. Being a part of a group, such as safety forces, would mean he is not a misfit. Now, he would like to follow the script plotted by Joana (the main character of his favorite story from a book): "She stands up to life, overcoming her own doubts, the unemployment, and personal crisis." This is what he knows he should do. It is time to face reality. Unfortunately, he does not yet feel up to the task because his advice to self is about how we get out of life.

At the beginning of the next session, Ricardo's life story built from the counselor's reading of Ricardo's responses to the CCI questions was

read back to Ricardo. This task, in line with the narrative work of White and Epston (1990), made it possible to continue exploring structured representations of himself and his life as it organized itself around certain problematic issues. This exploration of new self-representation makes conflict more evident as revealed in the following vignettes.

> *Counselor:* What touches you in that story?
> *Ricardo:* I don't know . . . life is just as it is. I've been through a lot; the only thing I haven't experienced is hunger [his speech follows his internal experience]. Everything that I ever wanted is right here [points at the text]: business, responsibility, helping others, and having a good life.

Later in the conversation, Ricardo adds the following.

> *Ricardo:* I don't know . . . life is full of ups and downs. Sometimes, I feel really empty, in the maze, penniless . . . the pressure is huge, and I have to pull myself together. It is this maze right here in the paper. It's my head, it's all inside. This feeling knocks me down, it pushes me. . . . Currently, I'm trying to get a better hold of it.

In his description of the discontinuities of life—its ups and downs—Ricardo expresses the difficulty of managing the "multiplicities of the self." Being responsive to Ricardo's needs, the counselor introduced the two-chair dialogue (Greenberg, Rice, & Elliot, 1993) as an experiential task to promote the process of negotiation and integration of the two parts in conflict (Greenberg et al., 1993). Two sessions after the two-chair dialogue, tasks specific to career counseling were introduced, aimed at reinforcing the emergent positive identity and responding to the immediate need of the definition of the self in its vocational dimension. To accomplish this goal, the counselor returned to the life-design process with career construction counseling of helping the client to write a success formula based on the client's CCI responses and the resulting life portrait derived from them (Savickas, 2011). Thus, the following success formula was considered: "I feel fulfilled and successful when I can help others by taking on a leadership role and making independent decisions." Ricardo considered working as a police inspector, personal security guard for important people, or firefighter as good vocational goals. He also added, "I can always work in a factory; what I need is a job so I can get on the right track." Next, help was provided to explore these and other career possibilities simultaneously after identifying barriers to their implementation. He considered his education level, the unemployment rate, lack of a driving license, and lack of motivation as the major barriers. The intervention at this level continued the therapeutic work, combining both dimensions of psychosocial and vocational functioning. For example, encouraging Ricardo to attend driving lessons implied that the feelings of inferiority he experienced in learning situations should be addressed.

The meanings associated with the new representation of the self-promoted changes were expressed in more positive feelings toward himself, a reduction in the number and intensity of conflicts with his parents, a return to the driving school, and the first thoughts about going back to

school in the following academic year. In Session 12, Ricardo decided to interrupt the helping process as a result of symptomatic relief. When he was informed about the need of a next step in the helping process aimed at consolidating the accomplished gains and working on internal conflicts involving his parental figures, he expressed his intention to search on his own for a way out of the maze.

Two years later, I contacted Ricardo to obtain his consent to publish the story of his life. He related that he had returned to school and that he was working at a factory. In that moment, criminal behavior had stopped, but his ambivalence was still present in a strong way: "A lot of easy money in a short time is a huge temptation. It's like a drug . . . having it all, but in the worst way. On the one hand, it's good—I'm ambitious—but on the other hand . . ." He feared being locked in jail, as well as believed that it would mean never leaving the terrorizing maze, losing himself and, consequently, losing his future.

Discussion

This case illustrates the two levels by which the integration of career counseling with psychotherapy occurs: tailoring career counseling to client characteristics and the therapeutic approach. The adjustment of the intervention to the client characteristics began in the first session. The first indicators were obtained from the initial assessment of the client history, previous treatment, and the nature of the disturbance. On the basis of this information, problem severity was judged as moderate, because Ricardo's coping mechanisms had been unsuccessful in keeping his anger level within manageable limits. In fact, his emotional dysregulation interfered with his ability to attend a vocational education program and driving lessons and was affecting his family life. With respect to problem complexity, Ricardo's life story of enuresis until the age of 7, significant reading and writing difficulties, marginal behavior, and repeated conflicts with authority figures suggested support of a thematic rather than a symptomatic focus.

The pattern of noncompliance and conflict with authority figures and the initial resistance to counseling were indicators of both an externalizing coping style and high reactance, which suggested low confrontation and the implementation of nondirective therapeutic procedures. These client variables were decisive in accepting Ricardo's initial goals of improving his conflict management skills and increasing his motivation to obtain his driving license. Because my intention as counselor was to adjust the intervention to Ricardo's sensitivity to the control of others and avoid increasing his level of reactance, I did not consider the goals focused on internal conflicts.

The relationship variables, such as the similarities between counselor and client culture, ethnicity, and gender, were present throughout the process, favoring the development of a successful working alliance. Finally, the overall indicators mentioned earlier provided the basis for an agreement to hold individual weekly sessions of 1 hour each.

Fitting career counseling to the therapeutic approach was achieved both through the compatibility between career counseling tasks and the therapeutic ones, as well as through the adjustment of career counseling goals

to the mediating goals of counseling. Compatibility between counseling and the therapeutic approach—and, therefore, the consistency of the intervention—was favored by the flexibility of the former. In this sense, the following practices of career construction counseling played a key role: (a) the participatory attitude of the counselor in the client's experience, providing process markers to guide the intervention; (b) the use of flexible qualitative assessments to fit the intervention to the needs of the client; and (c) the emphasis on the identification of life themes to facilitate the client's awareness of core conflicts underlying his or her personal problems, and thereby viewing career construction as a dimension of self-construction.

Ricardo's case also reveals how fitting career counseling to the therapeutic approach was guided by the need to tailor the mediating goals of therapy to the evolution of the client's characteristics throughout the intervention. The exploration of Ricardo's life themes gave a voice to a self-position that was silenced—that is, the one wanting to stand up for others, to escape from marginality, and to look at the future with a purpose. The new self-representation allowed the use of therapeutic work aimed at solving Ricardo's ambivalence between the new position and the old one, which was saturated in the themes of irresponsibility and being a misfit. Afterward, new career counseling tasks (e.g., success formula, exploration of career barriers) were introduced to strengthen the emergent positive self-representation and to respond to the need of vocational self-concept clarification. These career counseling tasks facilitated the client's awareness of the problem and his search for possible solutions. That is, his awareness of the conflict between two self-positions led him to the first commitment to change and to the achievement of one therapy goal: the return to the driving lessons. Progress in the vocational domain was also revealed by the emergence of his first thoughts about going back to school in the following academic year. The achievement of these goals fit the mediating goals of the early phases of therapy—pattern identification (Beitman, 1987) and contemplation (Prochaska & DiClemente, 2003).

Despite its premature termination, I chose to present Ricardo's case because it reveals the complexities of a process of continuous interchange between psychotherapeutic and career counseling. The progress at a symptomatic level (e.g., more positive feelings and reduction of conflicts at home) was the client's reason to decide to terminate the treatment. However, other factors could explain the unexpected termination. Indeed, the client characteristics, such as high reactance and low family income, are also factors frequently associated with high dropout and premature termination of counseling (Beutler & Consoli, 2003). From the counselor's point of view, further therapeutic work was needed, as revealed by Ricardo's ambivalence. The complexity of the problem required the intervention to evolve from symptom relief to the resolution of core conflicts and interpersonal themes.

Future Research and Practice

To optimize the integration of career counseling with psychotherapy, two areas of research are suggested: matching both client–counselor

characteristics and client-career counseling procedures. Research on client–counselor matching should address, for example, the analysis of counselors' openness to consider both career issues as mediating goals of psychotherapy and the integration of career counseling tasks into psychotherapy (Wampold, 2001). This type of research, involving counselors who often deal with clients' work-related issues, will provide knowledge on the convergence between counselors' beliefs and clients' needs, which is essential for counselor training to integrate career counseling with psychotherapy (Beutler et al., 2005). Research on the adjustment of the client's characteristics to the procedures of career counseling should focus on how relevant client variables, such as problem complexity and severity, coping style, reactance levels, and subjective distress, relate to career counseling tasks. Such research could provide data that complement data from psychotherapy research (Beutler et al., 2005; Roos & Werbart, 2013) and thus facilitate the adjustment of treatment to client characteristics.

In the field of career counseling, there is the need to develop strategies for the classification of clients into diagnostic treatment categories (Whiston & Rose, 2015). This line of research would be useful for integrating the assessment of career issues in the initial assessment of client problems, which is fundamental for planning how to match clients with appropriate career counseling procedures. Another research possibility would be to study the process of integrating career counseling with psychotherapy using the Therapy Process Rating Scale (Fisher, Karno, Sandowicz, Albanese, & Beutler, 1995). This measure analyzes the counseling process according to relevant STS dimensions, namely to what extent the counselor (a) attempts to increase or decrease emotional arousal, (b) focuses on insight or behavior-oriented change, and (c) is directive or nondirective. Thus, its use will allow the analysis of the integrative process in the matrix of the STS framework (Beutler et al., 2005).

The above-mentioned research could facilitate development of a training program emphasizing the learning of both skills for integrating the assessment of career issues in the initial assessment of the client and for making sensitive use of career counseling procedures (Blustein, 2006). Such a training program could allow the integration of career counseling into psychotherapy in a systematic and grounded manner.

These proposals for research and practice are fruitful fields of cross-fertilization. On one hand, they contribute to comprehensive psychotherapeutic practices; garner interest in the meaning of work in people's lives; link vocational behavior and psychosocial behavior; and demonstrate a commitment to abolishing the barriers between career counseling, personal counseling, and psychotherapy. On the other hand, dialogue with other disciplines could help career counseling to reconstruct itself by using new meanings and grasping the full complexity of people's real lives through contextualized practices.

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