



## Critical moments in career construction counseling



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### ABSTRACT

An important research need concerns identifying and describing factors that promote reflexivity and change in life-design career interventions. Career construction counseling, a primary life-design intervention, uses narrative methods in an interpersonal process of helping people design a work life through reflexive action. Using Interpersonal Process Recall (IPR), the present study examined what prompts reflexivity and change in career construction counseling. A single case analysis method involving a 24-year old Caucasian woman examined one client's experience of processes that prompted change and reflection about her current career transition. Post-counseling IPR with the client of her videotaped career construction counseling session indicated five major themes: (a) role models prompt identity reflection, (b) early recollections foster cohesion, (c) follow-up questions add depth to the story, (d) counselor as audience provides clarity and validation, and (e) career construction interview questions illuminate perspective and need for action. Results support prior research indicating the usefulness of career construction counseling for promoting reflexive action in life design.

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## 1. Introduction

Career construction counseling (Savickas, 2011, 2015) implements life design as a new paradigm for 21st-century career intervention (Savickas, 2012; Savickas et al., 2009). Life design amplifies the vocational guidance (Holland, 1997; Parsons, 1909) and career development (Super, 1990) paradigms of 20th-century career science and practice. It does so by emphasizing human diversity, uniqueness, and intentionality in work and career to make a life of personal meaning and social consequence (Savickas et al., 2009). Since the original statement of this new paradigm, need remains for research "to identify and describe the processes underlying life-designing interventions" (Savickas et al., p. 248). Toward this end, we used Interpersonal Process Recall (Kagan, 1980) in the present study to examine a single episode of career construction counseling between a client and counselor. Our goal was to determine factors during career construction counseling that promote reflexivity and change in the life-design career intervention process.

### 1.1. Career construction theory

Career construction comprises both a theory of vocational behavior (Savickas, 2002, 2013) and a system of career counseling (Savickas, 2011, 2015). With social constructionism as its base, career construction theory advances the psychologies of occupations (Holland, 1997), careers (Super, 1990), and life design (Savickas et al., 2009). In so doing, it incorporates and builds upon

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their respective traditions of person-environment fit emphasizing traits, lifespan development emphasizing developmental tasks, and narrative emphasizing life themes to comprehend career as a story. This permits viewing individuals as, respectively, social actors who display dispositions that fit corresponding types of work environments, motivated agents who develop readiness to fit work into life, and autobiographical authors who reflexively form themselves and their careers through self-defining narratives (Savickas, 2011, 2013). Career construction theory translates to practice in the form of a counseling model and methods for helping people construct their careers.

### 1.2. Career construction counseling

Career construction counseling entails an interpersonal process of helping people author career stories that connect their self-concepts to work roles, fit work into life, and make meaning through narratives about self and work. Using narrative methods, career construction counseling begins with a career construction interview (CCI; Savickas, 2011). The CCI contains a sequence of questions designed to prompt telling of the life story in a series of small, micro stories. From the telling of the life story, client and counselor co-construct a life portrait that entails an autobiographical narrative about the client's central life theme. In co-constructing a life portrait, the counselor aims to assist the client to relate the life theme to a career problem or transition currently faced. Counselor and client then endeavor to use the life portrait to prompt the client to move intentionally toward enacting self in a life-career.

The three career construction counseling processes of the CCI, life portraiture, and action aim to promote life-design counseling goals of increased narratability, adaptability, intentionality, and reflexivity. Narratability means the capacity to coherently tell one's own life story. Adaptability means the capacity to make changes in self and situation. Intentionality means the capacity to purposefully shape a personal life-career story that imposes meaning on vocational behavior. Thinking about their answers to the CCI questions promotes clients' reflexivity. Reflexivity means contemplative awareness and understanding about one's life and career development.

#### 1.2.1. Career construction interview

As seen in Table 1, the CCI comprises six questions about goals, self, stage, script, solution, and perspective (Savickas, 2011, 2013, 2015). Setting the scene for the current act in the client's life-career story, the CCI begins with the question "*How can I be useful to you as you construct your career?*". Answers to this question indicate the client's counseling goals and current problem and solution they already have in mind for it.

To indicate the reputation of the client as lead actor in their own story, the second question asks "*Who did you admire when you were growing up? Tell me about her or him.*". As clients describe three role models they describe themselves in terms of who they are and wish to become, their central life goal, and solutions to their main life problem. The third question asks "*What are your favorite magazines, TV shows, or web sites? What do you like about them?*". Manifest interests reflected in these vicarious environments indicate potential educational and occupational settings where the client as an agent, or manager of their own career story wants to enact their self-concept.

Linking self as actor to setting as agent, the fourth question asks: "*What is your current favorite book or movie? Tell me the story.*". The story is chosen because it provides perspective on the current problem and contains a plot resembling the client's own principal problem, preoccupation, or pain. The script connects the client's self-concept and preferred work environments into a life plan that the client can author. To elicit self-advice, the fifth question asks: "*Tell me your favorite saying or motto.*". The answer indicates the best inner wisdom and guidance the client has for dealing with life's problems.

Revealing the client's perspective on the current problem and central preoccupation, the final question asks: "*What are your earliest recollections? I am interested in hearing three stories about things you recall happening to you when you were three to six years old, or as early as you can remember.*". The counselor prompts the client to tell three early childhood memories that the person recalls in the present moment because they place the current transition problem in the context of central life themes and plots that structure the character arc of the person's life. As the client relates self-defining responses to the CCI questions, the counselor listens closely, asks follow-up questions, and makes reflective statements to clarify meaning. Counselor and client then use the client's responses to all six CCI questions to co-construct a life-career portrait.

**Table 1**  
Career construction interview content.

Question	Purpose	Part
1. How can I be useful to you as you construct your career?	Counseling goals set the <b>scene</b>	<b>Act</b>
2. Who did you admire when you were growing up? Tell me about him or her.	Reputation, character traits portray the <b>self</b>	<b>Actor</b>
3. What are your favorite magazines, TV shows, or web sites? What do you like about them?	Manifest interests indicate preferred work <b>stages</b>	<b>Agent</b>
4. What is your current favorite story from a book or movie? Tell me the story.	Storyline provides a <b>script</b> for linking self to setting	<b>Author</b>
5. Tell me your favorite saying or motto.	Self-advice offers a <b>solution</b>	<b>Advice</b>
6. What are your earliest recollections? I am interested in hearing three stories about things you recall happening to you when you were around three to six years old, or as early as you can remember.	Early memories give <b>perspective</b> on current problem	<b>Arc</b>

### 1.2.2. Life-career portrait

Using the answers to the CCI shapes a larger narrative, or portrait, that tells the career story with greater coherence, continuity, and clarity. Constructing a life-career portrait aims to promote understanding of the client's prevailing problem (arc), chosen solution (actor), preferred stage (agent), workable script (author), and action plan (advice). In turn, re-constructing clients' life stories aims to increase narrative identity, or who clients are as the lead characters in their own life-career stories, where in the world of work they would most like to be who they are, and what they believe it will take to connect themselves to possible work settings. Reflecting on the career story leads to setting goals and taking action for the next episode of the life-career.

### 1.2.3. Action

Having shaped the themes and patterns culled from the CCI micro-stories into a macro-narrative about the core problem or preoccupation, motives, goals, adaptive strategies, and self-view, attention turns to action. This involves constructing a formula for success and making a realistic plan to put the story into action. This plan involves reflecting on, telling, and performing the story. Reflecting on the career story leads to setting goals for the next chapter of the life-career. Subsequently, counselors encourage clients to tell their stories to valued audiences outside of the counseling context in their most cherished social relationships. Telling and talking about the career story and the conclusions drawn from the counseling process with valued audiences promotes making it more real and clear and feeling more confident in living it. Valued audiences typically include family members, friends, mentors, coaches, and teachers. Performing the story by identifying specific action to take increases exploration, commitment, and goal attainment.

Research has supported career construction counseling as an intervention to aid in reflection and specification toward an individual's work-life (e.g., [Maree, 2015](#); [Rehfuss, del Corso, Glavin, & Wykes, 2011](#)). As counselors are tasked to provide holistic services to clients, and as career is defined as all roles across the lifespan, the potential for further exploration into the critical moments during career construction counseling warrants investigation. The present study aimed to do so.

## 1.3. Interpersonal Process Recall

Interpersonal Process Recall (IPR) was born out of a health-skills training program ([Kagan, 1980](#)). The process involves reviewing an audiovisual tape of a client and counselor engaged in a counseling session. Conversations surround the thoughts and feelings underlying the responses while watching the tape. A key feature of this method involves allowing participants to reflect on experiences as they remember them, rather than self-critiquing in the moment. The process of recording, watching, and reflecting on moments within a caregiving session relies on a qualitative framework as the individual's experiences and reflections on the session are the key aspects to this process. [Kvale \(1996\)](#) found that participation in qualitative research surrounding personal and meaningful subjects often lead to positive feelings or a sense of growth for the client. In addition to the benefits of engagement in counseling, IPR aims to allow clients to access tacit, yet deeply meaningful situations that occurred within the session. Thus, IPR helps illuminate aspects of the session for the client and prompt deeper understanding of what took place both externally and internally.

While the benefits of the IPR process for both the client and counselor seem evident, the extant literature on this process is scant. [Larsen, Flesaker, and Stege \(2008\)](#) noticed this gap in the literature and underscored the importance of reflexivity in IPR interviewing: "with its intense focus on process and reflection, the role of reflexivity in IPR interviewing is clearly important and worthy of further exploration and research" (p. 31). Along with illuminating the dearth in the literature surrounding IPR, Larsen and colleagues indicated that results from their study conveyed that client and counselor experiences often differ significantly. Furthermore, they noted that rather than becoming disappointed by this fact, counselors can implement IPR to explore these differences with the client. [Levitt and Piazza-Bonin \(2011\)](#) researched client and therapist experiences in narrative therapy by utilizing the IPR method. Interestingly, the authors noted that clients and counselors tended to identify the same important moments in therapy, but often for different reasons.

## 1.4. Narrative outcome research

Narrative approaches to counseling can offer a unique perspective on the issues and concerns a client brings to counseling. Initially proposed by [White and Epston \(1990\)](#), narrative approaches involve a counselor working with a client to move from deconstructing small stories and moving to the construction of a preferred story. Thus, the process involves the re-authoring of a story and empowering the client to make steps toward living the new story. [Santos, Goncalves, Matos, and Salvatore \(2009\)](#) highlighted the importance of innovative moments in narrative therapy and reported positive therapeutic outcomes. Specifically, the authors identified these moments as exceptions to the problem-saturated narrative, and noted actions, feelings, thoughts and intentions as examples. Interventions that utilize this approach can be unique and impactful because objective measures of interests, values, needs, and abilities often yield decontextualized views of the client's experience, thus discounting individual differences ([Taber, Hartung, Briddick, Briddick, & Rehfuss, 2011](#)). Therefore, counseling approaches that use the narrative framework fit with research processes, such as IPR, that seek to draw upon and explore individual experiences.

Outcomes of narrative approaches to counseling have been well studied in the literature with a variety of approaches and foci. For example, [Weber, Davis, and McPhie \(2006\)](#) found the use of narrative therapy to be effective in working with female clients who have a relationship with disordered eating and depression. Weber and colleagues met with the individuals in group therapy sessions, with narrative therapy as the overall theoretical perspective. The authors used the narrative techniques of externalizing,

co-research, disengagement, and spirit-nurturing activities. They reported that through 15 sessions the participants reported a decrease in purging, bingeing, and self-criticism and an increase in appreciation of body parts. The results also revealed that the participants' level of depression significantly decreased. Later, Vromans and Schweitzer (2011) evaluated the outcomes of narrative therapy on adults in relationship with major depressive disorder. The authors measured personal inter-relatedness scores and Beck Depression Inventory-II scores of the participants after sixteen weeks of narrative therapy. The authors found that 75% of participants indicated improvement in depressive symptoms.

### 1.5. Purpose of the study

Prior research indicates that IPR can both illuminate previously unknown aspects of an intervention, and promote many positive aspects for the client including reflexivity (Helffenstein & Wechsler, 1982; Larsen et al., 2008; Levitt & Piazza-Bonin, 2011; Toukmanian & Rennie, 1992; Watson & Rennie, 1994). In the present study, we sought to examine critical moments in career construction counseling using IPR. Specifically, three questions framed the present research:

1. What significant client change occurs during a career construction counseling session?
2. Which elements of the career construction counseling process affect these changes?
3. Does career construction counseling foster client reflexivity about their life-career?

## 2. Method

### 2.1. Participants

The client presented as a 24 year-old single white woman who expressed that she wanted "a little more clarity" about her career direction. At the time of the study, the client had already completed her bachelor of architecture degree. Now, she was pursuing her master of architecture degree in a program that included both architecture and urban design at a large university in the Midwest. She expressed her relative certainty that she did not want to be an architect. Rather, she stated that she was thinking that she might be "a little more interested" in urban design and was also considering college-level teaching. She stated, too, that she had thought about other areas of interest, like psychology, yet noted that pursuing such interests would be "like starting all over at square one.". The counselor was a Ph.D.-level licensed psychologist and licensed clinical counselor. He retained 40 years of career counseling experience. Through his own study, writing, and practice, he also possessed profound knowledge about career construction theory and tremendous skill in the practice of career construction counseling.

### 2.2. Counseling process and setting

Counseling involved two one-hour sessions with the participant client. In the first session, the counselor conducted a career construction interview with the client. In the second session, the counselor and client co-constructed the client's life portrait. This was accomplished by the counselor reading back to the client the stories told by her answers to the CCI questions beginning with her three early memories. A private audiovisual recording studio served as the setting for the present study. The recording technician and the two study investigators were positioned unobtrusively out of sight of the client and counselor. Privacy was ensured by conducting the interview in a secure consulting room with no possibility for outside observation and, effectively, no possibility for distraction or disruption. The videotaped interview was captured digitally, subsequently stored on DVD, and kept in a secure location accessible only by the study investigators. The Interpersonal Process Recall session occurred in the recording area of the studio.

### 2.3. Procedure

The study was reviewed and approved by the researchers' institutional review board. The participant for the study was recruited through the researchers' professional networks. Prior to engaging in the study, she first received an information sheet explaining the scope and aims of the study and what her participation would involve. Upon verbal agreement to participate in the study, a study investigator contacted the prospective participant to confirm that she wanted career counseling and not another career service, such as job placement assistance, vocational guidance, or coaching (see Hartung, Savickas, & Walsh, 2015 for an overview of career intervention services). Once it was determined that she wanted career counseling, the investigator scheduled her for participation in the study. Informed written consent to participate was obtained from the client prior to the start of the study. The data collection involved a videotaped career construction counseling session and an audiotaped post-counseling IPR session with the client about the counseling experience.

The videotaped counseling session involved a one-hour career construction interview (CCI), a 15-minute break, and a one-hour life portrait between the client and counselor. The CCI began with the counselor asking the client how she hoped counseling would be useful to her. The CCI then proceeded through the series of five questions asking about the client's role models; favorite magazines, TV shows, or web sites; current favorite book or movie; favorite saying; and early childhood memories. As the client left the CCI session, a study investigator asked the client what to her was the most important thing that occurred during the CCI.

After a short break, the counselor and client reconvened to co-construct a life portrait for the client. This involved the counselor reading the stories from the CCI back to the client.

After a one-hour lunch break, the researchers performed an audio-recorded Interpersonal Process Recall (IPR) session with the client to identify critical moments that occurred during the counseling session. IPR involved a question-and-answer review of the videotaped CCI and life-portraiture sessions. As the videotape was played and reviewed by the two researchers and the client, any one of these three individuals would stop the tape when desired to inquire about what was happening at a particular point in time. IPR questions were open-ended, non-leading, and focused on the past with regard to what the client was thinking and feeling during the counseling session. For example, questions included *“What were you feeling when the counselor said that?”* and *“How did that part of the conversation impact you?”*. The focus of IPR was on the process of the interaction and not the particular content. The IPR session aimed to increase client awareness about critical moments that may have occurred during the counseling interaction. The IPR session was audiotaped and then later transcribed for analysis. IPR attempts to describe the process and progress of clients' thinking as they slowly build a new intention and new direction for the future.

### 3. Results

Immediately after the close of the CCI session, a study investigator asked the client about what happened during the session that she viewed as most important. The client indicated that telling the stories of her three early memories proved most significant for her. As she stated in her own words: *“Talking about early memories made me realize how I have always been an explorer and curious about things. And about how I like school.”*. She also noted that her conversation with the counselor helped her realize that her major field of study integrates two areas of interest for her. As the client commented, *“I never realized how architecture combines both science/technical and creative/artistic [areas of interest].”*

Results of the IPR session provided the client and researchers with the opportunity to discuss in more detail the critical moments that occurred during the two counseling sessions. The client expressed some feelings of uncertainty as the CCI session started. During IPR she recalled as the CCI session began she was *“not really sure what to expect...[and was] kind of confused at the beginning.”* She also commented that the counselor's friendly *“demeanor”* and efforts at breaking the ice to start the conversation at the outset of the session allayed her initial nervousness. She commented, *“Overall it was a good experience, just while talking to him I felt pretty comfortable pretty quickly, I think. After a while I didn't even really notice [the camera]. I think he was really good at keeping the conversation flowing and pulling out [more detail].”* The client also reported an overall sense of cohesion that emerged by the end of the first session.

During IPR, other major themes and reflections were discussed. Audio from the taped IPR session was transcribed and independently highlighted by the two researchers. Upon completion, the highlighted transcripts were synthesized and revealed five major themes: (a) role models prompt reflection, (b) early recollections foster cohesion, (c) follow-up questions add to the story, (d) counselor as an audience provides clarity and validation, and (e) CCI questions illuminate perspective and need for action.

#### 3.1. Role models prompt identity reflection

The first question of the CCI asks about role models from childhood. Upon viewing this portion of the tape and reflecting, the client stated that she was surprised by some of her answers to this question. She also discussed how the counselor's questions and prompts regarding her early-childhood role models allowed her to further reflect on and identify other important figures to her in growing up. The following example illustrates the client's thoughts while watching the videotaped counseling session and reflecting on her answers to this first question:

*Kind of surprised me. I forgot I even liked [Jane Goodall] I totally forgot about that... Like outside family-like characters or teachers she kind of popped into my head... I think it helped, too, once he had me start describing what I liked about those people. After describing the first two [role models] it kind of helped me to think of another one.*

#### 3.2. Early recollections foster cohesion

Without doubt, the CCI question that the client reflected on most during the IPR session was that related to her early childhood recollections. The counselor asked the client to share three of her earliest memories from childhood (ages 3 to 6 years old). During the IPR session, the client was asked by the researchers to recall when *“something really significant occurred.”*. The client expressed how discussing her early memories helped prompt cohesion in her career narrative and how it helped her to take ownership of her memories. Additionally, the client again expressed some surprise in her responses in this section. In the following example, the client explains how the early recollections question illuminated new discoveries and tied the whole CCI together for her:

*I think I'm a little surprised that these memories came really easily... I think the first point where it started to come together was once [the counselor] described the first memory and said it back to me... I think it's like once he got the first one and then it just kind of got off into a flow and started to come together and make a lot of sense. When he asked to put, like, a headline to it I was, like, kind of*

*capturing this memory. I think the first point where it started to come together was once he described the first memory and said it back to me.*

Later, while reviewing the videotaped life portrait session, the client reflected again on how the discussion of early recollections allowed for building cohesion of her career story. She recalled at the point where the counselor read back her first early memory about laying on her back in a bassinette looking out and having a lot of curiosity about and exploring the world:

*Well, I think that was kind of the point where I was like 'oh' like that's maybe the point where I started to see how this could fuse together and I think as he started to describe more and fused more memories into the now. I think that really played into the part of being in architecture school and realizing that I don't think I want to do it is that sort of sense of like 'I'm on my back and taking in a lot of information' and it was sort of the feeling of like being trapped.*

The client noted that hearing the counselor read back to her this early memory and relate it to her current career situation gave her new perspective. She commented how that memory proved to be a metaphor for her current experience in the architecture program in that she felt like in the program was very much again "on her back exploring and taking in a lot of information.". At that point, she noted that her story "just kind of got off into a flow and started to come together and make a lot of sense".

### 3.3. Follow-up questions add to the story

At the summation of viewing the first videotaped session, the client remarked that the counselor asking further questions about her story proved a critical moment in the session. Two of the six CCI questions focus on early childhood and adolescence. However, when asked if she wanted to discuss anything further, the client reflected on experiences in undergraduate school and her early emerging adulthood years. During the IPR session, the client expressed how these transformational moments were critical to discuss upon restructuring her story. The following example highlights the client's thoughts about this moment in the counseling session:

*He asked me a lot of questions about my childhood. But I kind of felt that my experiences in my undergrad was such, like a huge part of my experience in my life and how I changed and became who I was. And so, like, it a little bit felt like if we had finished after the childhood questions like part of my story was missing.*

The researchers prompted the client to describe the importance of the counselor allowing her to add this reflection on growing up once the initial questions had been answered. The client reflected on the process of how this restructured her story and foreshadowed the clarity to come in the second session:

*Yeah. I did grow up throughout my whole life... I think when he started to piece that together it was like feeding back the information. I think it was starting to make a little more sense... After the first interview I could see a little bit come together.*

### 3.4. Counselor as an audience provides clarity and validation

As mentioned previously, after a brief break the second counseling session began. During this session, the counselor read back the client's responses to the CCI questions. In so doing, the counselor crafted with the client a life portrait. This started with the counselor reading back to the client her early memories that marked the point at which the first session ended in keeping with the life portrait protocol (Savickas, 2015). During the IPR session, the client asked to pause the video during this section to reflect on what it was like having the story re-told. The following reflection of the client highlights the significance of the counselor as audience re-telling the story to increase clarity and validation for the client:

*I think I said a couple of times in the interview there are a lot of pieces that I sort of already knew but didn't know how to put them together... And it's like hearing somebody else say them and piece them together from what I said in a way, like, that is totally true, like, sort of validates the things that I think and I think sometimes I don't know if it's a real thing or if it's invalid.*

The client further reflected on how the life portrait process underscored her uniqueness, or individuality. This differed from her past experience with career assessments that rather highlighted her resemblance to others, or individual differences. The client explained it this way:

*I think, too, I have taken personality [measures] where it will tell you, like, who you are. It might be kind of true in a general kind of way, but it's not specific to you...and he's able to help me piece it together in a way that is specific to me and makes sense.*

Upon further reflection, the client shared the deep emotional recognition response that occurred during the second session. The researchers asked the client what she was thinking when the counselor read back her second early memory. This memory, at age 3 or 4, was about lying on the floor at her grandparents' house, very cozy with her blanket on top of her, comfortable,

safe, and watching a children's television show. The counselor related this memory to her current career situation of feeling safe in the architecture program yet, from her first early memory, curious and wanting to explore different options. She replied:

*I think the second one, as he kept talking more and more about fusing the memories together more with things that are happening now, it...just the picture is becoming fuller and more clear. And I think, too, I hadn't thought about...those realizations are hitting me and then just like it felt again...and it really is coming from things that I said. I think somewhere in here I almost cried because it makes so much sense. I was like having my own realization that there are two sides to me. One, like, I've been in architecture for a long time, it's sort of a security thing. But it's like I don't want to stay here but [it's] also scary [to take off the blanket and move ahead].*

### 3.5. CCI questions illuminate perspective and need for action

While watching the tape of the second session, the researchers discussed with the client how the questions of the CCI both framed her perspective on her current career situation and story and provided a direction for taking action. Further, the client expressed how clarification and validation that occurred early in the counseling session led to the need for action and direction in the future:

*It's getting clearer. And it's starting to piece together, but I think when he says, 'where does [client] go?', that is still the question a little bit. When he started talking about like the things I said about some of the questions – movies, role models – when he started talking about those, then I started to, like, piece together, like, more how these things come together.*

The researchers and student returned to the theme of the audience. Particularly, the client emphasized how telling her story to valued others could empower action in her career story:

*Where I really start to develop an idea or plan for something, or think about something...it grows and gets strength from starting to, like, say it and to talk to other people and get feedback.*

## 4. Discussion

Because it involves reflexive autobiographical work and goal-setting activities identified as critical to successful career planning (Brown et al., 2003), career construction counseling may offer particular relevance for life-career design in contemporary times (Savickas, 2011, 2012, 2015). Using IPR, we examined a single episode of career construction counseling conducted in two sessions to determine one client's perspective on what prompts client change and reflexivity in the counseling process. The goal was to identify critical moments and mechanisms in the career construction counseling process that foster significant outcomes for the client.

The present results indicate the importance of establishing an effective working alliance with the client at the outset of career counseling. This is consistent with the centrality of working alliance across counseling and psychotherapy modalities (Horvath & Greenberg, 1994). Thus, it is no less important and, indeed, seems critical based on the present results, to build rapport and a working alliance at the outset of career construction counseling. In the present case analysis, this proved very helpful for the client to feel comfortable in reflecting on her story and engaging with the counselor in the counseling process.

Clearly foremost among the present results, early recollections proved most significant for evoking overall client reflection and change. The client remarked several times about how early memories helped her to gain greater perspective on and add cohesion to both her current career problem and her ongoing life-career story. This mirrors the central importance accorded early recollections in career construction counseling. That is because early memories are thought to provide the most precise and clear indication of the client's perspective on their current problem (Savickas, 2011, 2015). From the innumerable possible events that might be recalled, the client typically selects those most relevant to their current situation (Mosak & Di Pietro, 2006). These early memories offer a way to understand one's self-perceptions and patterns of interacting with the world and relate them to current situations. While other CCI questions offer insights into particular aspects of the client's story (e.g., asking about role models or favorite magazines and TV shows), the present results indicate that early memories provide a more overarching understanding of the current problem faced. Thus, re-telling these stories to the client and relating them to their current career problem proves central to effective career construction counseling in terms of the client gaining new perspective on their career problems and moving toward change and new directions with greater intentionality.

Asking about role models also proved critical to the client in the present study for prompting identity reflection. However, in the present study the client reflected much more during IPR on early memories than on role models as a critical element of the counseling process. This outcome differs some from another study of career construction counseling wherein most client participants in the study reported that consideration of role models was most meaningful to them followed by exploration of early recollections (Rehfuss, del Corso, et al., 2011). Given this finding, it would seem important to determine whether or not role models and early memories also have the greatest impact on clients in terms of effecting desirable outcomes. Responses to the role model question elicited stories from the client about the self she has made and wishes to become. Our results indicate that asking follow-up questions and giving clients time and room to think about their childhood heroines and heroes is crucial for success. The

present results also point out the importance of the client describing what they admired about their role models and is consistent with theory that indicates by describing their role models, clients describe themselves (Savickas, 2011).

As described in career construction counseling procedures (Savickas, 2015) asking follow up questions is important for eliciting a more full and robust story. The client in the present study echoed this view. Particularly, she noted that when asked a general question that was not part of the CCI about anything further she wanted to discuss, it allowed her to comment on her late adolescent and emerging adult years thus far. In so doing, she felt she was able to give more context to her story beyond the focus of many CCI questions on early childhood. The client commented that if she had not done so she believed her story would have been incomplete.

The counselor's ability to serve as an audience member was emphasized as the client reflected on her life story and answers to the CCI questions. Specifically, the counselor listening for the client's story and following up with clarifying questions allowed the client and counselor to co-construct a story that was inherently her own. As mentioned above in the results section, during the IPR process the client responded that she was close to becoming tearful at times because what the counselor was reflecting back to her made so much sense. This is consistent with life-design discourse and narrative approaches to counseling (Hartung, 2013; Maree, 2007; McMahon, 2017; Savickas, 2011, 2015; Savickas et al., 2009). As the autobiographical author begins to tell their revised narrative to a captive and engaged audience, they begin the process of embracing a self that is more intentional and vital than before. The IPR process helped the researchers to understand specifically what this process was like for the client during the session.

Results of the IPR suggested that the clarified story prompted action at the culmination of the career construction counseling sessions. This was highlighted in the client's own reflection about how past plans have "gained strength" through thinking and talking about it. Furthermore, as the client and counselor discussed whether they had addressed the goals the client brought to counseling, the client agreed that they had. The client remarked that once the narrative of her life story started to come together she felt a cohesion that promotes action. Underscoring the importance of an audience, the client's reflections suggested she was poised to take action in her life-career, and echoed previous literature that suggested this action prompts further self-making and identity shaping (Savickas, 2012).

Certainly, the single-case analysis design limits the generalizability of the present study outcome. In addition, that the researchers both conducted the IPR session and analyzed the resulting transcript may have biased the present results because of their perspectives and how they might have inadvertently directed and shaped the flow of the IPR session and the subsequent analysis of it. Engaging trained facilitators not involved with the research analysis to conduct the IPR session may attenuate any such potential bias effect. Future studies may also do well to include analyses of multiple analyses of career construction counseling sessions using IPR.

On balance, the present study offers an initial response to an important need for continuing research on critical elements of life design counseling methods generally and career construction counseling in particular. The present case analysis supports the effectiveness of career construction counseling for promoting reflexivity consistent with several case study demonstration reports (e.g., Maree, 2015; Savickas, 2005; Taber & Briddick, 2011; Taber et al., 2011). It also adds to outcomes of empirical investigations indicating the usefulness of the approach for fostering client narrative career reflection, identification of life themes, and intentional career decision making (e.g., Rehfuss, Cosio, & del Corso, 2011; Rehfuss, del Corso, et al., 2011). Combined, the present analysis and these prior works underscore the usefulness of narrative interventions in helping people to create meaningful occupational futures (Bujold, 2004). Building on the present analysis, along with the case study reports and research conducted to date, further systematic study can increase knowledge about key elements of career construction counseling that promote client gains. Such research will do well to continue to concentrate on how career construction fosters and shapes human uniqueness and individuality (Tyler, 1978). In so doing, such research can advance the vast literature that aids understanding of individual differences with regard to career choice and decision making. It can also further identify key aspects of career construction counseling useful for prompting reflection and growth in life design.

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