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Career Construction Theory and Counseling Model

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CAREER CONSTRUCTION THEORY AND COUNSELING MODEL

The theory of career construction explains the interpretive and interpersonal processes through which individuals organize their personal characteristics, impose direction on their vocational behavior, and make meaning of their careers. Intended for use in multicultural societies and a global economy, the conceptual framework provides a contemporary explanation of careers and informs a model for career counseling. To accomplish its goals, career construction theory (CCT) addresses how individuals build careers through an epistemology of social constructionism that asserts individuals construct representations of reality, yet they do not construct reality itself. From this contextualist position, CCT conceptualizes development as driven by adaptation to an environment rather than by maturation of inner structures.

The CCT of vocational behavior and mentation is accompanied by an intervention model called career construction counseling (CCC), which occasionally I have imprecisely referred to as life-design counseling. More precisely, the term "life design" denotes a discourse about the third major paradigm for career intervention (Savickas, 2012). Historically, the three paradigms or general patterns of practice have evolved from (a) modern vocational guidance based on inventory *scores* (e.g., Holland, 1997), through (b) high modern career education and coaching based on developmental *stages* (e.g., Super, 1963), to (c) postmodern career construction based on autobiographical *stories*. As a discourse about a broad class of intervention models (Savickas et al., 2009), in addition to CCC, the life-design paradigm

is represented by a variety of recent approaches to career intervention, such as chaos theory (Pryor, 2010), narrative psychology (Cochran, 1997), and living systems theory (Vondracek & Ford, 2019).

Viewing careers from a constructionist perspective focuses attention on self-making. Accordingly, I begin this chapter by considering the self-constructing processes with which people make themselves into who they are in terms of cognitive schemas and performing strategies. This discussion leads to three central functions of the self that frame CCT: self as a social actor, self as a motivated agent, and self as an autobiographical author. I then embed the core schemas and strategies into these three functions of the psychological self. In the second half of the chapter, I relate the actor's behavior, the agent's strivings, and the author's explanations to a discourse that delineates CCC.

CAREER CONSTRUCTION THEORY

Making a self and constructing a career involve lifelong projects that evolve in complex phases and multilayered processes. CCT asserts that individuals build a self from the outside in, not from the inside out as personality trait theorists would have it. In this regard, Vygotsky (1978) noted that "There is nothing in mind that is not first of all in society" (p. 142). This means that an act is the beginning of a self (Leontiev, 1983), and the self takes definite form as an individual reflects on actions and experiences using the uniquely human capacity to be conscious of consciousness. This self-conscious reflection uses language to both construct and constitute social realities (Neuman & Nave, 2009). In a sense, we live inside language. Words provide a resource for living, especially for the reflexive projects of making a self, shaping an identity, and constructing a career. Through self-conscious reflection, the "I" observes the "me" (James, 1890; Taylor, 1992) and constructs stories about "me." The resulting stories are the content that constitutes the self in the form of favored attributes and significant events. Thus, individuals use language to become self-aware and organize their lives.

Although we talk our own selves into existence, we need more than language for self-construction. We need experiences on which to reflect, particularly interpersonal experiences in which we coordinate our actions and relationships. The self evolves in activity, as it internalizes cultural and social practices from the external world. So, a self is not actually self-constructed; it is co-constructed through interpersonal processes. In sum, the self as "I" denotes mental processes that enable people to take themselves as an object of attention and think self-consciously about their characteristics, motives, and experiences. The self as "me" denotes an emergent awareness that is culturally shaped, socially constituted, and linguistically narrated.

Self-Constructing Processes

The CCT of self-making and career building highlights the mental processes that individuals use to produce and make sense of their vocational patterns and pathways. CCT concentrates on how individuals construct characteristics, motives, and experiences with the information-processing functions of organizing, regulating, and conceiving. *Self-organizing* encompasses the mental processes by which individuals selectively become aware of, differentiate, and integrate their knowledge, competencies, beliefs, and experiences to form schemas and strategies of similar content in similar contexts. Self-organizing includes the processes of self-awareness and self-evaluation. *Self-regulating* means control of self by the self. It encompasses the processes of self-direction in establishing goals, self-management in guiding one's own behavior, and self-monitoring in assessing progress. *Self-conceiving* means composing symbolic representations for making sense of oneself, social roles, and the world. It encompasses self-representation to signify internal thoughts and feelings and self-coherence to consider what they mean.

The sets of mental processes encompassed by organizing, regulating, and conceiving are inborn and interdependent. In describing the "principle of unitary functioning," Ford (1987, p. 5) explained that, although the sets of processes are distinguishable, they always function together as part of a self-constructing, living system in a context. Although the autopoietic processes always function as a team, one process may take the lead in a figure–ground relation determined by what needs to be produced for a specific purpose in a particular context.

Self-Constructed Patterns

Over time and through repeated use in the vocational domain, the mental processes of organizing, regulating, and conceiving form relatively self-sustaining cognitive structures for categorizing information and judging situations. These schemas are formed as individuals recognize commonalities among successive experiences and organize them as a mental structure (Bartlett, 1932; Kelly, 1955). The cognitive schemas then become habitual patterns of mental processing that individuals use to focus attention, shape perception, absorb new information, and make judgments—thus, providing a basis for cross-situational and temporal consistency. The self-constructing mental processes of the knowing "I" and the schematic representations of the known "me" become increasingly complex and abstract with developmental changes in brain anatomy during childhood and adolescence.

In addition to judging social situations, the interpretations from psychological cognitive schema lead individuals to construct strategies for

conducting themselves in particular contexts and specific roles based on what needs to be accomplished and the feedback received. CCT considers the performance strategies to be psychosocial patterns in that they combine psychological and social dimensions for functioning in society. In CCT, the three major psychosocial strategies for social functioning are dispositional behavior strategies arising from attachment schema, adaptability strategies arising from motivational schemas, and identity strategies arising from reflexivity schemas—each of which will be described later in this chapter.

CCT conceptualizes the specific schemas and strategies used by an individual as "templates of possibility," a term coined by Josselson (2017, p. 22) to denote master narratives with which psychologists may understand a life in progress. The particular schema and strategy templates highlighted in CCT each explain a set of phenomena using a well-established mid-range theory with limited scope. As templates of possibility, CCT uses three pairs of schemas and strategies to understand and aid analysis of career-constructing processes and constructed content. For the sake of simplicity and to ease comparisons, each schema and strategy is presented as a four-quadrant template of possibilities. The schemas and strategies for understanding vocational behavior and career construction neither constitute competing nor alternative explanations; rather, each one offers a complementary vantage point from which to view career construction processes and products. The stable structure and analytic power provided by portraying the templates of possibility as quadrants enable practitioners and researchers to grasp the sequential emergence, reciprocal interaction, and continuity of career construction schemas and strategies across the life course. Of course, analyzing people's schemas and strategies in terms of four possible pathways overly simplifies complicated biographies and minimizes individuality. Individuals may operate from a range of positions within a quadrant or across quadrants. Furthermore, they do not necessarily follow a particular trajectory in lockstep. There can be twists and turns as people migrate to a different path that alters the trajectory of their careers in response to transformations in contexts and circumstances.

Psychological Selves

In CCT, the three self-constructing processes of organizing, regulating, and conceiving—and the cognitive schemas and performance strategies that they produce—each align *primarily* with one of the three perspectives in McAdams (2013) overarching framework of psychological selves. Beginning around the age of 18 months, self-organization comes to the forefront as individuals begin to construct a psychological self as a *social actor* with

intellectual abilities and personal characteristics, quickly recognized by other people in terms of a reputation. Here, self-organizing takes the lead, yet self-regulating and self-conceiving occur, although in less elaborate forms. Self-organization produces an attachment schema and a dispositional strategy for interpersonal relationships and social roles. By the end of childhood, self-regulating joins more closely with self-organizing, as a social actor begins to function more purposively as a *motivated agent* who forms educational–vocational goals and plans projects to achieve them. In comparison to personal characteristics that describe the social actor, motives explain the actor's strivings. Self-regulation produces a motivational schema and adaptability strategy for fitting into social roles. During late adolescence and emerging adulthood, self-conceiving takes an equal place with self-organizing and self-regulating, as an individual begins to function more fully as an *autobiographical author* who composes and revises a narrative to comprehend the agentic actor's career with increasing coherence and continuity. Self-conceiving produces a reflexivity schema and identity strategy for authoring a vocational identity and composing a career story. The following three sections elaborate the description of individuals as vocational actors, occupational agents, and career authors.

THE SOCIAL ACTOR

An actor constructs a self in an environment of other people, modeling oneself upon objects in the world, beginning with one's parents. When infants enter the family drama, they start to perform as social actors. Toddlers quickly come to understand the world of the family and also absorb the cultural discourses that structure it. They use their biological endowments and the social categories presented to them (e.g., gender, race, class, and birth order) to carefully make their places in the family drama. Within these demographic "givens," actors form characteristic behavioral dispositions by internalizing parental guides and role models. Parents or other familial guides are internalized as introjects or whole objects. Thus, a guide exists in one's inner cognitions as a full representation of the parents, as well as the child's relationship with the parents. To make a self that pursues goals and solves problems in growing up, children begin to elaborate the introjected self-structure to co-construct a working model for understanding themselves, other people, and the world (Bowlby, 1982). In due course, these internal working models form an attachment schema, that is, a generally consistent organization of mental representations that serves as a prime way of thinking about the social world as well as a script for interpersonal interactions and needs fulfillment in work roles.

ATTACHMENT SCHEMAS

To conceptualize attachment schema, CCT uses a quadrant template of possibilities delineated by Bowlby (1982) who described four distinct attachment schemas as secure–autonomous, anxious–ambivalent, dismissive–avoidant, and fearful–disorganized. Secure attachment schema shows low anxiety coupled with high autonomy that beginning in adolescence may support career exploration and commitment. Anxious attachment schema shows high anxiety coupled with low autonomy that beginning in adolescence may lead to commitment to parent choices without exploration. Dismissive attachment schema shows high autonomy coupled with low anxiety that beginning in adolescence may lead to undecidedness and avoidance of career commitments. Fearful attachment schema shows low autonomy coupled with high anxiety that beginning in adolescence and beyond may lead to vocational indecisiveness. Individuals can be described, from an individual differences perspective, as operating primarily from one of the attachment schemas, yet of course not all individuals fit neatly into one quadrant. Individuals can operate from a range of positions within a quadrant or across quadrants. They may also interact with different people using different schemas.

To resolve attachment problems, troubles, and conflicts that they encounter within their families, children select role models who portray tentative solutions to their main problems and dominant preoccupations. Role models provide imaginative resources that individuals use first as children and later as adolescents and adults to form and develop their personal characteristics. Acting as architects of the self, children select role models as their blueprints for self-design. Heroes model a way forward in which children may make lives for themselves by dealing constructively with their problems, preoccupations, and predicaments. In the process of self-construction, children build themselves as social actors by adopting and rehearsing their models' characteristics until those characteristics become their own.

In contrast to the influence of introjected guides, role models are incorporated identifications. Internalization of models through incorporation is the second core process of self-construction. Although individuals take in influential guides, they are never accepted as a personal choice because they were born to or adopted by those guides. By contrast, individuals consciously select role models, and in this sense, these models represent the first choice they make in constructing their careers. Thus, the choice of role models is indeed a decision about self-construction and characteristics that one prefers to enact in life's drama. Through the incorporation processes of identification and imitation, children develop characteristics that resemble those of their models, yet the role models remain external, unlike a guide who becomes an inner other. In a sense, children *take in* guides, yet *take on* some characteristics

of models with whom they identify. Identification, or the process of producing sameness with a model, occurs as individuals incorporate, as a rather permanent part of themselves, characteristics of the model.

Based on cultural discourses, parental influences, and role-model identifications, individuals rehearse characteristics that in due course become crystallized in a dispositional strategy for performing social roles, including the work role. In this regard, Holland (1997) theorized, consistent with Vygotsky's idea of bringing the outside in, that "the order of development usually is from activities to dispositions" (p. 19).

Dispositional Strategies

To conceptualize dispositional strategies, CCT uses a template of possibilities delineated by Gough (1987) and Hogan (1983) who described personality dispositions with a four-quadrant matrix formed by the conceptual coordinates of sociability and conformity. These two basic modes of functioning involve relating to other people and responding to cultural norms. Using these two dimensions of higher-order personality factors, individuals may be broadly classified into one of four types, with each type displaying distinct dispositional characteristics (Domino & Domino, 2006; Gough, 1987, 1990). CCT relates these four dispositional strategies to attachment schema. A secure attachment tends to lead to high sociability and high conformity (Gough's alpha disposition). These social actors may see themselves as ambitious, active, productive, and socially poised. In terms of reputation, other people tend to see them as dominant, enterprising, confident, talkative, intrepid, and encouraging. An anxious attachment schema tends to lead to low sociability and high conformity (Gough's beta disposition). They may see themselves as ethical, methodical, conscientious, dependable, modest, persevering, and responsible. Other people may see them as careful, reserved, inhibited, conforming, and submissive. A dismissive attachment schema tends to lead to high sociability and low conformity (Gough's gamma disposition). They may see themselves as innovative, forthright, versatile, and clever. Other people may see them as adventurous, impulsive, headstrong, and non-conforming. And fourth, a fearful attachment schema tends to lead to low sociability and low conformity (Gough's delta disposition). They may see themselves as shy, quiet, withdrawn, unnoticed, detached, and preoccupied. Other people may see them as timid, self-defeating, and passive. In CCT, these four dispositions relate to interpersonal and work behaviors, not to particular types of vocational interests such as those delineated by Holland (1997). CCT views interests and other motivational constructs from the perspective of self-regulation processes that a motivated agent uses to choose goals and make plans.

THE MOTIVATED AGENT

With the strengthening of an internal sense of agency during middle childhood, a second function of the psychological self begins to shape a motivational schema and adaptability strategy. Having become a recognizable social actor in the family drama, the individual must extend the self into school and the community. This self-extension requires a formulation of goals to strive for, then projects, and eventually a career. As children progress through grade school, they begin to choose goals that serve to direct their adaptation. From this perspective, social actors can now also be viewed as self-regulating agents who pursue goals of their own choosing.

MOTIVATIONAL SCHEMAS

Following from their attachment schema, children form a motivational schema. By self-regulating their feelings and actions based on reward contingencies in the social regulation provided by their parents, children form a schema that orients their motivation. Social regulation that emphasizes nurturance fosters in children a self-regulation schema focused on occupational goals that promote accomplishment by aiming for achievement, reward, and advancement. By contrast, social regulation that emphasizes security fosters in children a self-regulation schema focused on occupational goals that prevent problems by maintaining responsibility, security, and safety. The two foci differ in that a promotion focus directs behavior toward what one wants to do and personal growth, whereas a prevention focus directs behavior toward what one ought to do and away from failure and psychological harm. Because promotion and prevention foci form independent dimensions (Higgins, 1997; Johnson & Chang, 2008), a person's self-regulation schema may display high levels in one focus, both foci, or neither focus. The four quadrants of motivational focus work in conjunction with attachment schema that precedes them. Secure attachment usually leads to a hybrid focus on both promotion and prevention goals; an anxious attachment usually leads to a prevention focus; a dismissive attachment usually leads to a promotion focus; and a fearful attachment usually leads to amotivation and a lack of goals. The regulatory focus of an individual's motivational schema directs that individual's approach to career adaptation during periods of transition.

ADAPTABILITY STRATEGIES

The word *adapt* comes from the Latin, meaning "to fit." It means bringing inner needs and outer opportunities into harmony with the harmonics of a

good adaptation indicated by success, satisfaction, and stability (Holland, 1997). Individuals' particular goals for how to fit into the work world represent what people want to achieve and what they want to avoid. During periods of transition, individuals must adapt to changes and challenges in their social positions. CCT identifies three major challenges that require a social actor to adapt: vocational development tasks, occupational transitions, and work troubles. *Vocational development tasks* communicate social expectations about age-graded normative transitions. Societies synchronize adolescents and emerging adults to their culture by telling them in advance how to prepare for and enter their work lives. Thus, vocational development tasks provide powerful expectations with which young people can envision and prepare for occupations congruent with their abilities and interests. Simply stated, the major developmental tasks require that young people view work as a salient role, crystallize a preference for a vocational field and level, specify occupational preferences, enter a fitting job, and progress in that job until moving to the next job. The movement from one job to the next job is called an *occupational transition*. These transitions may be wanted or unwanted, planned or unexpected, and promotions or demotions. *Work troubles* involve unpredicted and unwanted challenges and changes. Troubling events such as plant closings, industrial accidents, occupational injuries, and contract violations may become extreme enough to be considered work traumas.

Changing educational and vocational positions compels individuals to adapt. CCT characterizes career adaptation outcomes as resulting from a sequence ranging across adaptive readiness, adaptability resources, and adapting responses (Rudolph, Lavigne, & Zacher, 2017). People are more or less prepared to change, differ in their resources to manage change, demonstrate more or less action when change is needed, and as a result, become more or less integrated into work roles over time.

Adaptive readiness. In CCT, adaptivity denotes the personal characteristics of readiness and willingness to meet career tasks, transitions, and troubles with fitting responses. Individuals reach the threshold to initiate the interpersonal and intrapersonal processes that guide goal-directed activity when they can no longer assimilate the changes or persevere in routine activities. At that point, they need to accommodate to the disequilibrium by changing the self or circumstances. The required accommodations typically evoke feelings of distress that prompt adaptive readiness. However, adaptiveness by itself is insufficient to support adapting behaviors. Individuals willing to adapt must bring self-regulation resources to bear on changing the situation.

Adaptability resources. The willingness to adapt activates an intensified self-regulation to manage tasks, transitions, and troubles that, to some

degree large or small, alter their social integration (Savickas, 1997). Individuals draw on these self-regulation resources to solve the unfamiliar, complex, and ill-defined problems presented by changes and challenges. These adaptability resources are considered psychosocial strategies because they reside at the intersection of person-in-environment. CCT conceptualizes resourceful individuals as (a) becoming concerned about their future as a worker, (b) increasing personal control over their vocational future, (c) displaying curiosity in exploring possible selves and future scenarios, and (d) strengthening the confidence to pursue their aspirations.

Career *concern* arises from a future orientation, a sense that it is important to prepare for tomorrow. Attitudes of planfulness and optimism foster preparedness because they dispose individuals to become aware of the vocational tasks and occupational transitions to be faced and choices to be made in the imminent and intermediate future. Thinking about one's work life across time is the essence of career because a subjective career is not a behavior; it is an idea. Planful attitudes and belief in continuity of experience incline individuals to engage in activities and experiences that promote competencies in planning and preparing for the future. A lack of career concern is called career *indifference*, which reflects apathy, pessimism, and planlessness.

Career *control* means being conscientious, deliberate, organized, and decisive in performing vocational development tasks and making occupational transitions. CCT conceptualizes control as an aspect of intrapersonal processes that foster self-regulation, not interpersonal processes that impact self-regulation. Its opposite is confusion, not dependence. Conscientious attitudes and belief in personal responsibility incline individuals to intentionally direct vocational actions. A lack of career control is often called career *indecision* and enacted as confusion, procrastination, or impulsivity.

Career *curiosity* refers to an inclination to explore and learn about the fit between oneself and the work world. Being open to new experiences and experimenting with possible selves and various roles prompt individuals to explore the work world to increase knowledge about the self and information about occupations and opportunities. Individuals who explore the world beyond their own neighborhoods gain knowledge about their abilities, interests, and values as well as about the requirements, routines, and rewards of various occupations. This broader fund of information brings realism and objectivity to subsequent choices that match self to situations. A lack of career curiosity can lead to *unrealism* about the work world, often based on images and ideas of what one wants or hopes for rather than what may be possible or likely.

Career *confidence* means anticipation of success and feelings of self-efficacy concerning one's ability to execute a course of action needed to make and implement suitable educational and vocational choices. Individuals

need confidence to act on their interests. Career confidence arises from solving problems encountered in daily activities, such as household chores, schoolwork, and hobbies. Individuals who have been sheltered or excluded from certain categories of experience (e.g., math and science) find it difficult to be confident in approaching those activities and consequently will be less interested in related occupations. Mistaken beliefs about gender, race, and social roles often produce internal and external barriers that constrain the development of confidence. A lack of career confidence can result in career *inhibition* that thwarts actualizing roles and achieving goals.

Adaptability strategies. In theory, individuals should approach tasks, transitions, and troubles with a strategy that includes concern for the future, a sense of control over it, the curiosity to experiment with possible selves and explore social opportunities, and the confidence to design their occupational future and execute plans to realize it. In reality, development along the four dimensions of adaptability progresses at different rates, with possible fixations and regressions. Delays within or disequilibrium between the four adapt-abilities produces strategies that may cause problems in crystallizing career preferences and specifying occupational choices.

Again using a quadrant template of possibilities, CCT conceptualizes four distinct adaptability strategies that emerge from the four motivational schemas. Individuals with a hybrid schema of promotion/prevention tend to combine all four resources to form an adaptability strategy that directs them to *look ahead* and *look around*. Individuals with a motivational schema focused on prevention tend to combine concern and curiosity to form an adaptability strategy that *looks ahead* through in-depth exploration of a foreclosed choice. Individuals with a motivational schema focused on promotion tend to combine control and confidence to *look around*, but not ahead, taking things as they come and dealing with problems as they arise. And finally, individuals who focus on neither promotion nor prevention goals display an amotivation syndrome. They lack adaptability resources and tend to *look out* to avoid problems.

Adapting responses. Adaptability strategies shape the adapting behaviors that actually produce vocational development and construct careers. CCT views adapting to tasks, transitions, and troubles as fostered principally by five sets of behaviors, each named for their adapting function of orientating, exploring, deciding, planning, and problem-solving. These constructive activities form a cycle of adapting performance that is periodically repeated as an individual must fit into a changing context. Realizing that a change or challenge approaches, individuals can adapt more effectively if they meet

changing conditions with growing awareness and information-seeking, followed by informed decision-making, planning, problem-solving, and eventually forward-looking disengagement. Recycling or reengaging in career-adapting behaviors occurs frequently in the United States where the median years in a job are 4 years for females and 4.3 years for males (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2018). Rather than developing biographical certainty about an institutionalized 30-year career with one employer (Super, 1957), people now must adapt to an individualized work life with destandardized trajectories consisting of more frequent and less predictable occupational transitions.

Better career outcomes (adaptation results) are achieved by individuals who are willing (adaptive readiness) and able (adaptability resources) to perform coping behaviors (adapting responses) that address changing conditions. An analogy to airline travel may sharpen the distinctions between readiness, resources, responses, and results. In preparing to depart, flight attendants ask passengers seated in an exit row whether they are "willing and able" to assist in an emergency. Some people may be willing, yet unable; other people may be unwilling, yet able. In the language of CCT, the attendant is asking the passengers whether they have the readiness and resources needed to act in an emergency. To continue the analogy, the airplane emergency might require some lifesaving actions. In career construction, this adapting or "doing" involves the behaviors of orienting, exploring, deciding, planning, and problem solving. Adapting responses lead to some outcome or adaptation that is judged for its goodness of fit in terms of success and satisfaction.

INTERESTS

When viewing the self as a motivated agent, CCT concentrates on how individuals use their motivational schema and adaptability strategy to select goals and make plans. The particular content of goals is discussed in the vocational psychology literature in terms of personal needs, work values, and occupational interests. CCT pays particular attention to interests because they connect personal needs to relevant goals (Savickas, 2014). For CCT, interests are not essential traits but rather co-constructed beliefs that particular activities or objects may be useful in furthering career construction and social adaptation.

From Latin, *interest* means *to be between*. Interest manifests a state of attraction between an individual's psychological needs and social opportunities to fulfill those needs (Savickas, 1999). The psychosocial attraction or interest follows from motivated agents evaluating an object or activity

as useful in helping them become more whole or complete. They believe that engaging in the interesting activity will address the preoccupations and problems that they carry forward from their family-of-origin and will further their self-construction. People also are attracted to join social environments populated by individuals whom they resemble (Holland, 1997). Of course, many people cannot pursue vocational interests that lead to their goals and meet their need for self-realization. Instead, they must take the only employment available to them. This uninteresting work at least fosters adaptation as survival, if not adaptation as self-realization. In such circumstances individuals may continue to use leisure pursuits to substantiate a self and fulfill their needs.

THE AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL AUTHOR

When individuals reach late adolescence, society expects them to "get a life" (Habermas & Bluck, 2000), that is, integrate their actions and agency into a unique identity supported by a unified life story. During childhood and early adolescence, agentic actors portray a complex amalgam of parental influences and role-model identifications. Late in adolescence, they begin to integrate these influences and identifications by conceiving a vocational identity and composing a career story. As individuals learn more about themselves as social actors and motivated agents, they become ready to pattern their constellation of goals and purposive projects into a coherent and credible story. This identity narrative is not a summing up but a synthesis (Erikson, 1968), a configuration that reconciles multiple personal characteristics to produce an integrative solution to the problems in making the transition from school to work and from adolescence to adulthood. In doing this autobiographical work, individuals enhance the coherence of their narrative by gradually rearranging and creatively reinterpreting the past to suit future aspirations. In addition to strengthening coherence of the story, they also lengthen its continuity by "selectively reconstructing" (Erikson, 1958, p. 111) the past so that it seems to have planned them, or better yet, that they seemed to have planned it. The resulting identity narrative and its successive revisions express the uniqueness of an individual in her or his particular context by imposing meaning on vocational behavior (Tiedeman & Field, 1964). Individuals use this self-sustaining narrative to evaluate career opportunities and negotiate social constraints. In choosing an occupation based on this narrative, individuals state in occupational terminology their ideas about who they are; in entering an occupation, they seek to realize that vocational identity; and after stabilizing in an occupation, they need others to recognize and confirm that identity (Super, 1963).

REFLEXIVE SCHEMAS

When developmental tasks, occupational transitions, or work troubles obstruct routines and habitual behaviors, self-conceiving autobiographical authors deliberate about their vocational identities and career stories by thinking about who they are, analyzing their conduct, and considering future actions. CCT uses the term *biographicity* to denote the use of reflexive schemas to conceive vocational identities and compose career narratives in a "two-stage process" (Dallos & Stedmon, 2009, p. 5) of *retrospective reflection* and *prospective reflexivity*. Reflection involves a more passive recollection that clients use to learn about themselves, whereas reflexivity involves a more active conceptualization that clients use to change themselves in some way (Savickas, 2016). In the first stage of biographicity, clients use reflection to learn about themselves by recalling experiences that bring the past into the present. Reflection about the past can foster first-order change that leads to action without a change of perspective. In the second stage of biographicity, clients add agency to self-awareness (Rennie, 1992), as they extend the present into the future by reflecting on their reflections. Thus, reflexivity is a second-order cognitive process that involves a more active conceptualization in which individuals use knowledge from first-order reflections to determine and design future projects. Reflexivity regarding the future can lead to second-order change through action emerging from a new perspective (Fraser & Solovey, 2007).

Autobiographical authors differ in their reflexive schemas for deliberating about life design and career construction. Building on the attachment and motivational schemas, a reflexive schema for authoring a career narrative takes shape during late adolescence and emerging adulthood. CCT conceptualizes variations in autobiographical self-conceiving using a quadrant template of possible schemas for reflexive deliberation described by Archer (2012): autonomous, communicative, meta, and fractured. Using *autonomous reflexivity*, individuals create their own career paths following purposeful and self-contained deliberation. Supported by a secure attachment and a hybrid of promotion and prevention motivation, they set their own goals as "they think and act" (Archer, 2003, p. 7). *Communicative reflexivity* involves internal dialogues that lead to action only after being completed and confirmed by parents or significant others. Supported by an anxious attachment and a prevention focus, "they think and talk" (Archer, 2003, p. 7). *Meta-reflexivity* involves internal dialogues in which individuals routinely question their own thoughts and critique their parents' way of life. Individuals who routinely engage in meta-reflexivity often criticize and disengage from parental values, which intensifies personal stress and social disorientation. Supported by an avoidant attachment and a promotion focus, "they think and think" (Archer, 2003, p. 7). *Fractured reflexivity*

involves deliberations that intensify stress and confusion rather than form conclusions about what to be or do. Individuals who routinely engage in fractured reflexivity may feel rejected by parents and subsequently limit their own participation in interpersonal relationship and work roles. With a fearful attachment and amotivation, they focus on daily survival as "they think and talk to themselves" (Archer, 2003, p. 7).

Identity Strategies

Reflexive self-authorship produces an identity, that is, a narrative about the self in a social role. Individuals have multiple identities, each one corresponding to a particular social role that they enact. For example, a vocational identity tells the story about an individual in a work role. Viewing the distinct modes of reflexivity in terms of strategies for dealing with career concerns leads directly to typologies of vocational identity formation and functioning. The four distinct reflexive schemas produce four different strategies for forming a vocational identity and dealing with career concerns.

CCT again uses a quadrant template of possibilities to describe three distinct identity strategies based on Berzonsky's (1989) conceptualization of different ways in which people form, maintain, and revise their psychosocial identities: informational, normative, and avoidant. Securely attached individuals tend to use an *informational* strategy in which they actively gather and evaluate relevant information before committing to an occupational choice. Individuals with an anxious attachment schema tend to use a *normative* strategy in which they accept standards and prescriptions promulgated by significant others in making their choices. A normative strategy combined with healthy family relations may reflect an interdependent pattern of career construction, one in which an individual freely chooses the collective good of the family as the criterion for career choice. In this way, a normative strategy can lead to an interdependent identity defined by relationships with others rather than by individual attributes. Individuals who display interdependent identities have been described as society-minded (Kegan, 1994), norm-favoring (Gough, 1990), and guardians (Josselson, 2017) because they prioritize connection to others and preserve what was. By contrast, a normative strategy combined with an anxious attachment may lead to dependent decision-making, foreclosed vocational identity, and constrained career construction. Individuals with a dismissive attachment schema tend to use an *avoidant* strategy in which they let circumstances and situations dictate their choices. In an effort to ignore problems and choices for as long as possible, they delay, procrastinate, avoid commitments, and keep exploring. With a fearful attachment schema, individuals tend to remain unreflective and show

little capacity for self-definition and commitment to values, goals, or relationships. With neither set ideological commitments nor occupational direction, their work histories are generally unstable, disjointed, and externally controlled. Berzonsky (1989) did not assign them a unique identity strategy, suggesting that they also use the avoidant strategy to form a vocational identity and compose a career story.

CAREER AS STORY

The essential meaning of a career is revealed in self-defining stories that individuals tell about the tasks, transitions, and troubles that they have faced. In career stories that chronicle the recursive interplay between self and society, the actor tells what happened in a job resume; the agent explains why it happened by an occupational plot; and the author interprets what it means with a career theme.

Fundamentally, the arrangement of jobs into sequence is a story, yet it is a chronicle without a plot. An occupational plot makes connections that transform the job sequence in the objective career into a subjective career. Emplotment configures the diverse incidents and different episodes into a part–whole structure in which the parts gather meaning in relation to the whole. However, occupational plots explain why an individual changed positions without reference to personal meaning. Plots portray the self as agent, not an author.

Authoring deeper, private meaning to accompany the public explanation of a plot requires a theme. An occupational plot's implicit theme becomes more explicit through its repetition in accumulating episodes. Cumulating incidents and insights into an abstract theme thickens the plot and amplifies larger meanings. A sense of unity crystallizes, as the career theme imposes meaning on the plot parts through their participation in the whole. Autobiographical reasoning seeks to craft this thematic unity, not uniformity, out of contradictory beliefs and baffling behaviors. Thematic unity must be achieved in a properly complicated way that integrates diversity without homogenizing it.

The repeating pattern in a career theme reveals people to themselves and others. As individuals incorporate new experiences, they use the unifying ideas of a career theme to impose a pattern of meaning that comprehends the new episodes in the occupational plot. When the plot ruptures, individuals use the recurrent pattern of the theme to restore order and redirect action. In addition, a career theme also brings continuity to a plot by tracing how a person remains identical with self despite diversity across educational and vocational positions. Even when everything seems to change, the theme remains the same. Recall that in constructing a narrative identity, individuals

work out the problem of their sameness across time. A theme grounds the "here and now" in the "there and then." In telling how the self of yesterday became the self of today and will become the self of tomorrow (McAdams & Olson, 2010), an author's identity narrative supports both a stable actor with a continuous story and a flexible agent capable of change. The theme keeps the narrative going by continually integrating events and pulling them into the plot (Giddens, 1991).

The theme, clear or complicated, carries to work settings the concerns that constitute the individual and matter most in defining self and expressing identity. A theme articulates a purposive attitude toward life that brings a perspective to bear on experiences. The thematic purpose pursued in the occupational plot makes work the outer form of something intensely personal. Integrative choices allow individuals to actively master what they passively suffered, as they turn private preoccupations into public occupations. This can be made clear for a particular person by personalizing the following mapping sentence: "I will become (social actor's reputation) so that I can (motivated agent's goal), and in the process (autobiographical author's theme)." For example, one medical student's mapping sentence was "I will become a psychiatrist so that I may heal families in crisis and in the process reduce my own feelings of helplessness about my own family's suffering." Compare this to a classmate's statement of "I will become a neurosurgeon so that I may perform delicate operations and in the process prove to my father than I am not clumsy." The public meaning in these two statements indicates the social contribution and occupational position; the private meaning expresses a career theme. Readers might complete their own mapping sentence, "I am becoming a counselor to help people (do what), so that I (personal meaning)." For example, one counselor stated that "I became a counselor to do for others what I wish had been done for me when I was hurting."

SUMMARY OF CAREER CONSTRUCTION THEORY

In sum, CCT provides a comprehensive framework with which to situate, evaluate, and interpret research and reflection about the behaviors of vocational actors, strivings of occupational agents, and explanations of career authors. Table 6.1 delineates the basic conceptual structure of schemas and strategies used by CCT as templates of possibility for making sense of individuals' vocational behavior, occupational motives, and career narratives. Each template provides an insight into an individual's career. Taken together, they yield a complex yet coherent understanding of how individuals construct and constitute their careers and design their lives. An example of how the theory may be applied to individuals appears in the

TABLE 6.1
Templates of Possibility for Career Construction Theory Schemas and Strategies

	Self-organizing Social actor	Self-regulating Motivated agent	Self-conceiving Autobiographical author
Schemas	ATTACHMENT	MOTIVATIONAL FOCUS	REFLEXIVITY
	Secure	Promote/prevent hybrid	Autonomous
	Anxious	Promotion	Communicative
	Dismissive	Prevention	Meta
	Fearful	Amotivation	Fractured
Strategies	DISPOSITION	ADAPTABILITY	IDENTITY
	Alpha	Look ahead and around	Pathmaker
	Beta	Look ahead	Guardian
	Gamma	Look around	Searcher
	Delta	Look out	Drifter

report of a longitudinal study of four men's career construction that, with vivid particularity, illustrates, explains, and demonstrates theorems in CCT (Savickas, 2019a). In addition to its contributions to vocational psychology, CCT informs a model for career counseling that is described in the second half of the current chapter.

CAREER CONSTRUCTION COUNSELING MODEL

CCT has been translated into practice as a model for vocational intervention called CCC. The practice model concentrates on clients making meaning, forming intentions, and acting purposely as they re-story their careers (Maree, 2013). CCT differs from vocational guidance, that is, a nomothetic model that concentrates on clients' *reflection about resemblance* to vocational types and matches them to occupational positions with the goal of fostering first-order change (Fraser & Solovey, 2007). By contrast, CCC pursues an idiographic model that concentrates on clients' *reflexivity about uniqueness* and meaning-making with the goal of fostering second-order change. Vocational guidance and career education expand a client's current perspective on a problem by providing new information about matching occupations and managing careers, whereas CCC transforms a client's perspective on a problem by releasing emotion, altering assumptions, pondering different ideas, and making meaning.

The model for CCC combines dialogic procedures based on CCT with narrative processes described in the innovative moments model (IMM) of client change devised by Miguel Michael Gonçalves and his colleagues (Gonçalves, Matos, & Santos, 2009; Gonçalves & Ribeiro, 2012; Montesano, Oliveira, &

Gonçalves, 2017). Paulo Cardoso has led the research and reflection to articulate the use of the IMM in CCC (Cardoso, Silva, Gonçalves, & Duarte, 2014a; Cardosa, Savickas, & Gonçalves, 2019). In the CCC model, aspects of the IMM have been slightly modified for use in career counseling given that Gonçalves originally created IMM to study the processes of client change during narrative psychotherapy.

The CCC discourse traces client change across problem formulation and three phases of counseling. After formulating a client's career concern, Phase I of counseling concentrates on the problem. Counselors help clients to understand and explore micronarratives or short stories about the *constructs* with which they have formed their careers. Phase II then concentrates on change. In this phase, counselors help clients to *deconstruct* the micronarratives and *reconstruct* a macronarrative that shifts perspective and prompts new understandings with which to *co-construct* plans. And finally, Phase III concentrates on clients consolidating their transformation, reviewing plans, and beginning to perform career change. In addition to different dialogic tasks across the three phases of the intervention, counselors attend to different types of innovations in clients' narratives. Gonçalves has labeled three main forms of narrative innovation as reflection, action, and protest. He distinguishes them when referring to innovation in the problem narrative (Reflection 1, Action 1, and Protest 1) or innovation in the process of change (Reflection 2, Action 2, and Protest 2).

It is through innovative moments in client narratives that counseling co-constructs career change. The narrative innovations themselves may be produced by the client, offered by the counselor and accepted by the client, or suggested by the counselor and developed by the client. When innovative moments occur in any of these three ways, counselors prompt client exploration and elaboration of the innovation by asking questions, responding with empathy, or offering feedback. The following sections briefly summarize the dialogic tasks and IMM markers of client change across the three phases of CCC. A free manual explains the CCC discourse in detail (Savickas, 2019b).

Formulate the Problem

Counseling commences as clients explain their understanding of their career concern. Then client and counselor work collaboratively to formulate the career problem in a manner that leads to clear goals for counseling. In listening to problem narratives, counselors concentrate on clients' initial attempts to understand the problem [Reflection 1]. Innovative reflections may include considering what caused the problem, identifying negative effects of the problem, exploring how the problem impacts the client's

life, and broadening the perspective on the problem. In reflecting on the problem over time and in different contexts, clients may revise the meaning of past vocational experiences and foster new ways of thinking and feeling. A second type of narrative innovation reports previous attempts to deal with the problem [Action 1]. The actions may include searching for solutions, seeking information, developing skills, exploring new contexts, and trying new coping behaviors. A third type of innovative moment occurs when clients object realistically to the problem's assumptions and prescriptions or criticize institutions or people who support the problem [Protest 1]. In addition to formulating the problem and elaborating innovations in the narrative, counselors at the beginning of counseling assess client adaptability strategies, agree on goals for counseling, and strengthen the working alliance.

PHASE I: CONSTRUCTING THE STORY WITH MICRONARRATIVES

After formulating the problem and agreeing on goals, the next dialogic task is to have clients examine the *constructs* with which they have formed their careers so far. To do so, counselors conduct a career construction interview during which they elicit micronarratives or short stories about important incidents, recurrent episodes, and self-defining moments. Counselors prompt such stories by asking clients about their role models, manifest interests, current favorite story, tactical mottoes, and early recollections. These dialogues provide the first opportunity for clients to examine their vocational interests, work values, and career goals.

The self-constructing processes of self-organizing—especially self-awareness and self-evaluation—play a key role as individuals selectively become aware of, differentiate, and integrate their knowledge, competencies, beliefs, and experiences to understand how they have constructed their careers. The change process at this point is furthered by deeper understanding of the career constructs, particularly in terms of needs, interests, and values [Reflection 1]. The change process also advances if clients deconstruct, question, or refute problematic assumptions and prescriptions inherent in their career constructions [Protest 1].

PHASE II: RECONSTRUCTING THE STORY WITH A MACRONARRATIVE

Phase II goes beyond understanding the problem to focus on change. Client and counselor begin to consider change by reconstructing the micronarratives into a macronarrative that takes a new perspective on the client's career. This occurs by integrating the small stories into a large story that binds them together with a career theme that invests meaning in the occupational plot.

If micronarratives express self-negating ideas, confining roles, or cultural barriers, then counselors support clients in thinking differently about the stories so as to access new meanings that open possibilities and restart stalled initiatives. The autopoietic processes of self-conceiving—especially self-representation and self-coherence—play a key role as clients make sense of themselves, social roles, and the world.

The resulting macronarrative reorganizes experiences and explains what is at stake in the next episode of the career story. The enhanced self-clarity enables clients to make their intentions more apparent to themselves and their counselors. With this newfound clarity, clients may choose priorities, form intentions, and envision the next scene in their career story. Based on this re-understanding at the end of Phase II, clients sketch new career plans and affirm the assertiveness needed to enact the plans. Client and counselor together outline an action agenda that will move the client from the currently experienced situation to the one currently desired.

During Phase II, the change process is furthered when clients reconsider the meaning of past vocational experiences and recognize patterns and themes [Reflection 1]. With this recognition, clients may adopt new ways of thinking, as they increasingly focus on future actions and an emerging new identity [Reflection 2]. This includes use of a reflexivity that concentrates on what has changed and how it has changed by focusing prospective reflection [Reflection 2] on retrospective reflections [Reflection 1]. Using reflexivity, clients reposition themselves relative to the career problem, as they recognize their own influence on the problem and envision the next scene in their career story. In this regard, counselors listen for Protest 2 innovations in which clients empower themselves to defy demands of the problem and assertively affirm career plans. "Protest 2" may be closely followed by "Action 2" innovations that anticipate performing behaviors that create change.

Phase III: Consolidating Change

Phase III concentrates on the clients conceptualizing their transformation. The major task is to stabilize the new narrative so the changed story takes hold and becomes permanent. Few clients spontaneously initiate deliberation on the changes created by counseling. Therefore, counselors prompt clients to discern the difference between the old story and the anticipated story as well as conceptualize the process by which they themselves have authored and authorized the change [Reflexivity]. Recognizing differences between the problematic past and a more adaptive future expands narrative coherence and continuity. In understanding the process of change, clients also realize they are not only an actor in that process but also its author.

This realization reinforces personal agency to mobilize action. At this point, clients often express both an assertiveness [Protest 2] and emotional grounding that enable them to anticipate enacting their plan [Action 2]. The autopoietic processes of self-regulating—especially self-direction in setting goals, self-management in controlling behavior, and self-monitoring in evaluating progress—play a key role, as clients begin to perform the new story. At the end of Phase III, transformation is consolidated when clients describe the changes they have achieved, recognize the processes underlying these changes, and exercise their own authority in telling the new story with intentional self-regulation.

Closing CCC involves confirming that clients have accomplished the goals agreed upon at the beginning of counseling. Counselors usually signal the close with a few sentences that summarize the client's reflexive conceptualization of the change process. In the end, counseling concludes with clients substantiating the new career plan by reviewing their intentions to initiate change and with the counselor encouraging clients to go further and deeper into the world to answer the questions they brought to counseling, as they enact a more satisfying life. After completing counseling, clients perform change by engaging in new projects that advance self-making, identity-shaping, and career-constructing.

A CASE STUDY

The following case study explicates career-constructing by describing the use of the CCC discourse to assist a client co-construct a viable and suitable identity narrative that enabled her to make educational–vocational choices and take actions to lead a more satisfying life.

FORMULATE THE PROBLEM

When the counselor first met Elaine, she was a 20-year-old full-time college student who had just completed the fall semester of her sophomore year. During the spring semester, she must declare her major. She lived at home and commuted to campus. She found it hard to deal with the pressure exerted by her mother to declare a major in premed [Protest 1]. Elaine reported that after talking with two different career counselors, she was even more undecided [Action 1]. In describing her situation, Elaine said, "floating in space, no direction, all dark. I am afraid to choose the wrong thing. I could make a wrong choice. Then, I would not live up to other peoples' expectations. I am failing at what I should do" [Reflection 1].

Elaine guessed that she would declare a premed major and then enter medical school, yet she was unsure about this choice. She wanted the counselor

to help her explore whether medicine was the right choice for her. She sometimes thought engineering would be a better choice, and she took an engineering class during the fall semester [Action 1]. She believed that chemical engineering might be a good choice, yet civil engineering seemed easier. She had requested information from another college that had integrated computers into their chemical engineering curriculum [Action 1]. She was attracted to computers and liked the idea that if she transferred to that college she could live in a dormitory [Reflection 1]. In response to the question of how counseling could be useful to her, Elaine responded that she did not know why she could not choose an academic major, she needed help in making a choice, and wondered whether medicine would be the right choice for her.

In thinking with clients, as they present the concern that brought them to counseling, practitioners do at least three things. First, they make sense of the problem narrative by considering it as dimly forecasting the development of a thematic concern. A client's problem narrative prepares the ground, foreshadows the plot, and establishes a mood. Elaine had trouble making decisions, felt pressure from her mother to choose a premed major, and feared that she may remain confused after this third experience of counseling. Second, counselors make an initial assessment of a client's adaptability strategy. Elaine showed concern and curiosity yet not control and confidence. And third, the client and counselor establish counseling goals. With Elaine, the first goal was to increase a sense of career control by assisting her to understand why she has difficulty making decisions and enhance her decisional skill. The second goal involved building the confidence needed for her to take action in the real world.

Phase I: Constructing the Career Story with Micronarratives

The genius of a counselor is in asking questions, not in providing answers. Clients usually know implicitly the answers yet cannot formulate words with which to think about them. Often, they are unaware that they are unaware (Morf & Koole, 2016). To explicate their implicit *unthought known* (Bollas, 1987), career construction dialogues prompt client to deliberate and say what they know. Responding to the interview questions enables clients to hear their own stories and witness themselves in the company of an expert consultant. Clients intuitively select the stories that they themselves must hear. So very often, experienced practitioners hear explicitly in the problem narrative the counseling outcome a client implicitly seeks. However, the counselor's role is not to state that solution but to help clients hear their own stories and their purpose in choosing them, as they gradually come to understand their problem from a new perspective.

To prompt clients to reflect on what they know implicitly, career construction practitioners begin with the first story-crafting question in the career construction interview (CCI; Savickas, 1989, 2015) by inquiring about characteristics of three role models to learn about the client as a social actor. Elaine stated that *Anne of Green Gables* had spirit and a temper, set goals and went after them, did what she wanted, showed integrity, and had fun. The heroine in the book *A Wrinkle in Time* led her friends in a showdown against creatures trying to take over their minds. She thought of ways to stick together and fight the creatures. Laura, in the book *Little House on the Prairie*, had wild ideas of things to do and enjoyed competing with and outdoing others. Second, the counselor listened for manifest interests and preferred occupational environments, as Elaine responded to a question about favorite television shows, magazines, and websites. She liked *Vogue* because it is about fashion, *BusinessWeek* because it is about advertising campaigns, and *Details* because it is about men's clothing. Her favorite television show was *Laverne & Shirley* because they do things off the norm without getting into trouble. The third story-crafting question deals with a client's implicit script for the next occupational move. When the counselor asked Elaine about her current favorite story from a book or movie, she said it was *The Search of Mary Kay Malloy*, the story of an Irish girl's voyage to America by herself. As for her advice to herself, Elaine reported two favorite sayings. The first, from *Curious George*, was "I am curious about things." The second was "Do it well," which to her meant nearly perfectly. To complete the CCI, the fifth story-crafting question aimed to learn her perspective on the current career concern. Elaine reported the following early recollection:

> "Going to Disneyland with my grandparents and uncle and his girlfriend. I was in the back of the camper trying to sing and dance for my grandmother. She told me to sit down so I would not get hurt. I got on my uncle's girlfriend's nerves by trying to talk to her. I tried to talk but she did not think I should move around at the same time."

Elaine gave the story this headline: "Little girl annoyed because she must sit still." The headline succinctly states her perspective on the career problem.

ASSESSMENT PROTOCOL

Before beginning counseling with clients, practitioners review the CCI stories to assess their meaning in relation to the client's goals for counseling, and prepare to retell the stories in a manner that describes the social actor's characteristics, highlights the motivated agents' manifest interests, and envisions the autobiographical author's script for extending the occupational plot.

To guide this assessment, CCC discourse provides a protocol with eight elements. The assessment protocol can aid practitioners heed the advice of the novelist Eudora Welty (1983)—listen *for* a story rather than listen *to* a story. Listening to a story means absorbing it by being passive and receptive. Listening for a story means actively discerning and collaboratively shaping it. To focus their discernment, counselors keep in mind that, from many available stories, clients tell those that they themselves in the moment need to hear.

To make sense of Elaine's stories, the counselor first reviewed how she wanted to use the counseling experience. Elaine asked the counselor to help her understand why she could not choose as well as move her closer to making a choice, whether medicine or something else. Using her goals to contextualize her career stories, the counselor examined the vignettes for instances of career control and experiences with making decisions.

Second, after considering her goals for counseling, the counselor examined Elaine's early recollection, inferring that it alluded to the perspective from which she viewed her career problem. The first verb in an early recollection usually indicates a particularly important form of movement for a client. In Elaine's early recollection, the first verb was "going." This may mean that she wants to move, be on the go, and travel. The counselor then inspected the remaining stories for evidence to support this idea. The inspection found the phrases "moving around" and "dancing" and then further support in her favorite book, which tells the story of a girl's journey to another country. "Singing and dancing" seem important to her. She is enthusiastic about life. Also "try" appears three times in the early recollection, suggesting that Elaine may be industrious and persistent in pursuing difficult goals. "Talking" also appears in the early recollection, so she likes to communicate and attempts to convince others to change their minds. However, when Elaine tries to talk, her audience will not listen. And finally, in the early recollection, an adult woman tells her to sit down and stop dancing. The counselor recognized a tension in Elaine's perspective between wanting to express herself yet being told to sit still. It is important to remember that her early recollection does not cause her behavior; rather, she has re-membered it to convey her perspective on the current situation.

Third, the counselor considered the headline that Elaine composed for the early recollection as a rhetorical compression that expresses the gist of her story from her perspective. From Elaine's vantage point, she is a "little girl" who is annoyed because powerful others stop her from enthusiastically pursuing her dreams. They will not listen to her and insist that she stay put where they place her. It is worthwhile to read the headline in two ways. On the one hand, it indicates in the here-and-now, the perspective that Elaine takes on her career problem. On the other hand, it may suggest a career theme that will shape her occupational plot. She wants the counselor to encourage her

movement and her gusto for life, as well as teach her how to persuade others to accept her plan rather than steal her life.

Fourth, the counselor attended to Elaine as a social actor by considering the characteristics she values. How Elaine described her role models reveals core elements in her self-concept and articulated how she wishes to act in the world. Elaine's key figures model spirit, enthusiasm, playfulness, goals, competitiveness, persistence, temper, fighting wrong-headed authority, and enlisting compatriots in these battles. These qualities find expression in her other stories. She is not frightened by wild ideas and doing things off the norm as long as they are fun and do not get her into trouble (promotion/prevention hybrid).

Fifth, the counselor sought to understand how Elaine was attempting to solve her problems in constructing a career, and which occupations might help her actively master the problems she faced. To do so, the counselor compared the perspective narrated in the early recollection to the tentative solutions displayed by her role models. In Elaine's case, the early recollection described a playful girl being told to sit still and do as she is told. This, of course, resonates with her current dilemma—sitting still as her mother pressures her to declare a premed major. The sitting still might be her metaphor for indecision. The counselor summarized this understanding by drawing a lifeline from the perspective of sitting still to the effort to increase the confidence she needs to fight for her independence, as her role models might.

Sixth, the counselor appraised Elaine's vocational preferences by viewing her manifest interests through the lens of Holland's (1997) realistic, investigative, artistic, social, enterprising, and conventional (RIASEC) hexagon. She showed interest in fashion, clothing design, and advertising. She likes to do things off the norm without getting into trouble. Looking through the RIASEC lens, the counselor sees that Elaine most resembles the artistic and enterprising types. Individuals with strong interest in creating and persuading usually show potential for creative leadership and innovative problem-solving, yet do not fit easily into occupational niches. They also like to travel, have adventures, and display uniqueness. Enterprising–artistic types also seem more comfortable being second in command or on a team because the first in command usually resembles the enterprising–conventional type. The lack of investigative characteristics among Elaine's manifest interests seemed atypical for someone in engineering (IRE) or medicine (IRS). To brainstorm possible jobs, the counselor consulted the O*NET to find occupations coded as enterprising–artistic and artistic–enterprising. Among those listed were advertising, fashion design, and public relations. Adding realistic to artistic–enterprising identified the occupations that design new computer systems technology, improve existing uses of computers, and solve complex problems in computing for business,

medicine, and other fields. If Elaine pursues engineering, then it may lead to a specialty that emphasizes management or computer systems. If she pursues medicine, then it may lead to an enterprising-type specialty such as hospital administration or artistic-type specialties such as dermatology and plastic surgery.

Seventh, the counselor turned to Elaine's anticipated script that imagines a young girl who travels the country in search of herself. Elaine is beginning to live this script, as she searches for herself during counseling. She is using an informational strategy for forming a vocational identity, yet has not made a commitment to an occupational choice. Elaine was fighting off her mother's attempt to confer on her the vocational identity of a physician. Her vocational indecisiveness was a temporary position that had her sitting in a prevention-focused position of doing what she "ought" rather than a promotion-focused position of pursuing what she "wants." CCC probably should concentrate on identity interventions and occupational exploration-in-breadth rather than exploration-in-depth. Her tactical advice to herself for moving forward suggested that she combine being curious (promotion focus) with doing things right (prevention focus).

Eighth, the counselor profiled Elaine's career adaptability. Her strategy coincided with her indecisiveness and identity ambiguity. She was coping with the vocational development task of crystallizing a vocational identity and tentative preferences for occupational fields as a prelude to specifying an academic major and occupational choice. She was deeply concerned about the future, as shown by her entering career counseling for a third time. From her remarks, it was clear that the major deficiency in her adapt-abilities was the absence of career control. The counselor decided to encourage Elaine to view her indecision as a strength, not a weakness. Sitting still in indecision was her way of fighting powerful creatures who are trying to control her career. She showed some curiosity about possible selves and alternative occupations. For example, she has written to another college for information. She already knows implicitly that exploratory behavior is paramount because her advice to herself was to be curious. She could use more confidence in her ability to make it happen without doing things perfectly. With an increased sense of control and more information-seeking, her career confidence will grow.

The final assessment task in CCC is to synthesize the micronarratives into a macronarrative. To do this, the counselor composed a life portrait (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Hoffman Davis, 1997) to portray Elaine's situation, leaving room to insert and elaborate the finishing touches that she must add during counseling. The portrait included tentative answers to implicit questions such as "Who am I?" "What is my quest?" and "How can I grow and flourish?" The portrait emphasized the major career theme, affirming its significance

and authenticating its validity. The counselor used the theme to unite the meaning of the client's separate career stories into a narrative structure that integrated the micronarratives. To enhance Elaine's ability to decide, the macronarrative highlighted what was at stake and the choices to be made. After the counselor sketched a portrayal that included the character (innovative leader or leader of innovation) whom the client wishes to play, the stage on which she wishes to locate the action (travel and adventure), the script she wishes to enact now (self-discovery), the advice she gives herself (be curious yet conscientious), and her point of view on the problem (struggling to stop sitting still and live with enthusiasm), the counselor was ready to engage Elaine in a dialogue directed toward the goals she had brought to counseling.

PHASE II: RECONSTRUCTING THE STORY WITH A MACRONARRATIVE

Good movie directors set up a vista before they take viewers into a scene and then a moment. Thus, to begin the second session, the counselor delineated the vista by reviewing Elaine's response to the opening inquiry regarding how she wanted to use counseling. Then the counselor presented the life portrait in a way that highlighted her developmental trajectory, especially her move from problem to strength, so that she could actually feel her own movement from tension to intention. The counselor presented the portrait as a tentative sketch and invited Elaine to amend and alter it to fit her understanding. In the end, the validity of the co-constructed portrayal was arbitrated by its utility to the client.

The portrait depicted Elaine as fighting powerful creatures who are trying to steal her mind or, in this particular instance, her career. She rebels by sitting still and refusing to decide in their favor while she marshals personal resources and social support to make her own choice. Then the counselor paused to get her reaction and revisions. The counselor explored her feelings about the portrait, because affect helps to create meaning. They also looked at her strengths, especially the personal characteristics of which she was most proud. They then discussed how the problems she currently faced were really the best solutions that she could come up with so far. For example, Elaine and her counselor reconstructed her indecision from being a problem to being the best solution she has found for trying to fight off the creatures who are trying to steal her career by making her sit still for what they want. In this way, the counselor encouraged her to use her own language, especially her own favorite metaphors and verbs, as a means of controlling the situation and increasing feelings of agency. Then the counselor helped Elaine understand how her early recollection aligned with her interests in activities labeled as artistic (singing and dancing) and enterprising (communicating

and persuading). In the end, Elaine and her counselor co-constructed the version of the life portrait that she wanted to use to address her career concerns.

Co-construction of Elaine's career narrative already had addressed her first concern—understanding why she did not, rather than cannot, make a decision regarding her academic major. Thus, the counselor moved to her second question—how well would a career in medicine suit her. They considered her manifest interests and how she might wish to position herself in society. They discussed her interests in being a leader, manager, or supervisor who is independent, creative, and on the go. The counselor commented that if she were to become a physician, then she would probably be attracted to an enterprising medical specialty such as public health or an artistic medical specialty such as dermatology. They talked about exploring majors in computer science (because she mentioned that she had requested information from another college where they have integrated computers into their chemical engineering curriculum), advertising, marketing, and business management. They also discussed the importance of being on the move, traveling, and having adventures, as she thinks of possible selves and future scenarios. Most of all, they discussed discovering ways she could flourish in places where self-definition and self-determination would be possible.

Having addressed, to her satisfaction, the issue of how poorly a career in medicine suited her and which other occupations merited exploration, the counselor turned to her third question, which was how to move toward choosing a major. They discussed ways forward from where she now sits, including alternative resolutions and possible selves. The counselor explained that development arises from activity and overcoming difficulties met in the world. They then engaged in a conversation about self-construction activities that might move her closer to being the person she wanted to be, such as working at a summer job away from home, living in a college dormitory, taking a workshop on assertiveness, and meeting with a counselor to discuss family issues.

Phase III: Consolidating Change

In the few minutes remaining in the second session, the counselor prompted Elaine to compare her old story and the anticipated story as well as conceptualize the process by which she had authored and authorized the change. Elaine explained that recognizing differences between her problematic past and anticipated future began when she viewed her current situation in light of the perspective in her early recollection. She thought that this was the moment in which she shifted her perspective. Elaine stated that the transformation was reinforced by comparing the early recollection headline to the characteristics she admired in her role models. She conceptualized

the difference between the old and new story as sitting still in her past versus getting up to go into her future. In summarizing her plans, Elaine highlighted her own agency in changing the perspective in the problem narrative to her new outlook on the anticipated story. She was encouraged by the conversation and felt that looking back over her life had given her the ability to move forward and the resolve to do so. They agreed to meet again during the summer.

FOLLOW-UP

When visiting the counselor the next summer, Elaine reported that she had taken a continuing education course in assertiveness, worked with a college counselor for five sessions to improve her relationship with her mother and reduce her perfectionism, lived away from home while working a summer job at an amusement park, moved into a college dormitory, and completed elective courses in computer science and advertising. She had declared a major in chemical engineering with a minor in computer science, yet still wondered if marketing would better fit her. With regard to the concept of the "unthought known" (Bollas, 1987), recall from Elaine's opening statement that she had requested information from another college where they have better integrated computers into their chemical engineering curriculum.

The counselor next saw Elaine after she graduated with a major in chemical engineering and a minor in computer science. She told the counselor how much she had enjoyed her courses but detested the sexism exhibited by many of her male instructors. To combat their bias, she had organized a club for females who were majoring in engineering. She was proud of what they had achieved in combating the sexism of those who would steal their careers. She was even more proud of the occupational position that she had recently secured. In two weeks, she would begin a job as a computer systems analyst for a large chemical company. This position required traveling to regional branches throughout the United States where with a team of colleagues she would solve problems in computer systems. Furthermore, Elaine told the counselor that her mother was proud of her accomplishments and pleased with her prospects. Elaine looked forward to being a woman on the go, one encouraged by a mother who now tells her not to sit still when she faces sexism at work. She glowed as she told the counselor how she had used the things that they had talked about to help her friends make career choices. Six years later, after obtaining a master's degree in systems engineering consulting, she was working as a consultant in chemical product design and enjoyed designing clothing during her leisure time.

CONCLUSIONS AND PRACTICE IMPLICATIONS

CCT explains the interpretive and interpersonal process that individuals as actors, agents, and authors use to make a self, shape an identity, and build a career. The theory highlights the self-constructing processes of organizing, regulating, and conceiving that produce cognitive schemas and performance strategies for coping with vocational tasks, occupational transitions, and work troubles. Concentrating on self-constructing processes and constructed patterns may be useful to practitioners and researchers in comprehending an individual's behaviors as a vocational actor, strivings as an occupational agent, and explanations as a career author.

The discourse about CCC concentrates on clients making meaning, forming intentions, and taking purposive action to deal with their career challenges and changes. During counseling, practitioners assist clients to articulate vocational stories, deconstruct demoralizing beliefs, reconstruct an identity narrative, co-construct the next episode in an occupational plot, and take actions to manage their careers and live more satisfying lives.

Practitioners who wish to develop their skill at CCC have access to free resources at www.Vocopher.com, including a manual, workbook, and two inventories. To learn more about the counseling process, they may consult the *Career Construction Counseling Manual* (Savickas, 2019b). *My Career Story* (Savickas & Hartung, 2012) is a client workbook that practitioners may use in delivering the intervention. Two psychometric inventories designed to measure components in the career adaptation model are the *Career Adapt-Abilities Scale* (Porfeli & Savickas, 2012) and the *Student Career Construction Inventory* (Savickas, Porfeli, Hilton, & Savickas, 2018). For advanced study of career-constructing as a narrative intervention, practitioners may consult an article that explains innovative moments in the construction of career change (Cardosa et al., 2019) and a special issue of the *Journal of Vocational Behavior* that deals with reflexivity by career clients (Savickas & Guichard, 2016). The American Psychological Association has published a book on counseling for career construction (Savickas, 2019c) and two DVDs that show live demonstrations of the intervention. The first DVD shows CCC completed in a single session (Savickas, 2006). The second DVD (Savickas, 2009) shows three sessions each for the cases of Ryan and Michael, which were analyzed separately by Cardoso, Silva, Gonçalves, and Duarte (2014b, 2014c) using the IMM. The case of Ryan was also analyzed by Taveira, Ribeiro, Cardoso, and Silva (2017) using the Therapeutic Collaboration Coding System to demonstrate how collaboration becomes therapeutic.

The first step in developing greater narrative competence in conducting CCC may be to explore and elaborate your own career story and then how

you use the profession of counseling to advance that story as well as make a social contribution. It may be useful to complete the *My Career Story* workbook yourself, and maybe review the results with a colleague or mentor.

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