



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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