



Narrative career counseling: My career story and pictorial narratives

Jeannine M. Taylor, M.S.Ed., Doctoral Candidate, Counselor Education & Supervision *,
Suzanne Savickas, M.F.A., M.Ed., Doctoral Candidate, Counselor Education & Supervision

Kent State University, Kent, Ohio, United States

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 6 July 2016

Accepted 27 July 2016

Keywords:

Reflexivity

Agency

Narrative career interventions

Constructionism

ABSTRACT

The present article addresses the questions of what changes during narrative-informed career interventions and what prompts client reflection. We interrogated two case studies that both used the interventions of *Pictorial Narratives* (Taylor & Santoro, 2016) and *My Career Story* (Savickas & Hartung, 2012). Being heard and validated were elements that prompted client change through increased reflexivity and agency. And, reflexivity and agency were fostered by encouraging clients to consider the contrast between problem and preferred pictorials and to connect the perspective from early recollections to possibilities in a reconstructed career narrative. This pair of contrasting symbols prompted deep sense-making and new realizations that primed purposeful actions in the real world to reconstruct career and life. In addition to addressing the questions posed by the organizers, this article describes how the *Pictorial Narrative* methods, when used in career counseling, can be integrated with the *My Career Story* workbook to enhance client reflection and agency. The two case examples illustrate this unique integration of constructionist career counseling interventions.

© 2016 Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

1. Introduction

This article addresses, from the perspective of a counselor and a researcher, the questions posed by the organizers of this symposium about narrative-informed career interventions. To do so, we concentrated on two specific interventions - *Pictorial Narratives* (Taylor & Santoro, 2016) and *My Career Story Workbook* (Savickas & Hartung, 2012). Based on two case studies using these methods, we respond to the three questions posed by the organizers: "What changes during the intervention? What elements prompt these changes? How was reflexivity fostered and developed?" What changes is meaning. Being heard and validated are elements that prompt change through increased reflexivity and agency. And, reflexivity and agency are fostered by encouraging clients to consider the contrast between problem and preferred pictorials and connect the perspective from early recollections to possibilities in evolving career narratives.

When clients experience the sense of being heard and validated (Myers, 2000), they can reflect more deeply on their preferred ways of living and working. This reflexivity is essential for the client to make meaning during a counseling session. Through listening, counselors convey to the client that she or he is the expert on her or his own life (Bohart & Tallman, 1999). Accordingly, constructionist and narrative-informed career counseling approaches emphasize meaning-making through reflection.

* Corresponding author.

E-mail address: jtaylo12@kent.edu (J.M. Taylor).

In addition to reflection, constructionist career counselors embrace the notion of enhancing agency, which refers to a sense of being able to take action (Walter & Peller, 1992). Constructionist counselors co-create with clients what seems out of control to them as in their control. It's not that the problem is solved, but that the problem is now described in a way that does not stifle the client's movement to take action (Walter & Peller, 1992).

Two constructionist interventions that have been found to be useful in fostering reflection and agency are *Pictorial Narratives* (Taylor & Santoro, 2016) and the *My Career Story Workbook* (Savickas & Hartung, 2012). In addition to addressing the questions posed by the organizers, this article describes how the Pictorial Narrative intervention, when used in career counseling, can be integrated with the MCS Workbook to produce enhanced client reflection and agency. Two case examples will be used to illustrate this unique integration of constructionist career counseling interventions.

1.1. Pictorial narratives

The Pictorial Narrative (Taylor & Santoro, 2016) intervention represents an innovative, versatile, and optimistic approach through which counselors can make contact with a client's inner frame of reference. The Pictorial Narrative process integrates experiential and narrative components as a way to maximize positive and meaningful career counseling experiences for both client and counselor. The experiential component consists of inviting the client to draw a picture of the Problem story, as it is being experienced in the here-and-now, as well as a drawing of the client's Preferred Outcome, which depicts how the client would be thinking, feeling, and behaving differently if the problem were to suddenly and miraculously disappear. A third picture may be drawn, the Baby Steps picture, which depicts one small step the client can take to move from the problem story toward the preferred outcome.

Pictorial Narratives are rooted in the postmodern constructionist assumption that emphasizes the quality of the dialogical engagement between the counselor and the client (Gergen, 2009), and the humanist/experiential assumption that drawings provide an uncensored view of a client's inner subjective experience (Naumberg, 1958, as cited in Ulman, 2001). Thus, both drawings and dialogue are integral to the meaning-making processes that occur when the counselor and client are engaged in the Pictorial Narrative process. Pictorial Narratives provide a way to maximize opportunities for client reflection by helping clients feel heard, understood and validated through a richly descriptive, collaborative therapeutic dialogue about what is meaningful to the client. The Pictorial Narrative intervention allows clients to tell their stories in a way to help them make sense of their life experiences, to integrate personal meanings, and to create movement toward their preferred view of self.

Pictorial Narratives can be viewed as a constructionist, narrative-informed approach to counseling in any modality, including career counseling. The intervention emphasizes the need to reflect on meaning by creating a therapeutic space in which clients can re-construct, or re-author, new life stories that resonate with their values, interests, and life themes (McAuliffe & Emmett, 2016). These stories encompass the client's past, present, and future life experiences. Pictorial Narratives, when used in career counseling, assume the constructionist assumption that career information is enhanced significantly when personal meanings become the central task of the counseling session (Peavy, 2010). By listening to the client's interpretations of the meanings attached to the client's drawn images, a richly descriptive, meaning-generating, collaborative dialogue emerges.

It is within this dialogue that *clients* will steer the direction of the counseling process. The sessions are client-centered, where the individuals lead and navigate their story to unfold and develop through the process of reflection. The clients make meaning of life experiences by reflecting on deeply-rooted, emotionally salient memories while attaching new meanings to old events. In addition, clients envision the self in ways that are congruent with their values, in ways they want to see themselves, and in ways in which they want others to see them. Clients experience the sense of being heard, listened to, and validated while feeling a sense of hope that new possibilities for change can occur.

It is within this dialogue that *counselors* can assume a therapeutic stance that is real, authentic and genuine by relinquishing the need to be expert. Also, the counselor will exhibit an abundance of curiosity (Anderson, 2007) about what it feels like to be in the client's shoes and appreciate that what emerges during the counseling conversation does not need to be verifiably true; rather, it needs to be meaningful and helpful to the client. The counselor establishes an emotionally safe, collaborative therapeutic environment in which moments of enduring change can occur. Throughout the narrative career counseling process, the counselor encourages client reflection through listening and dialogue: "Listening in dialogue is listening more to meanings than to words.. In true listening, we reach behind the words, see through them, to find the person who is being revealed. Listening is a search to find the treasure of the true person as revealed verbally and nonverbally" (Powell, 1986, p. 49). The reflexivity in the Pictorial Narrative intervention demands a "conscious and deliberate consideration of self, relationship building, reflective processes, [insight], imaginative delivery and establishing a safe environment" (Fox, 2011, p. 6). The Pictorial Narrative intervention is an experiential intervention. According to Fox, "reflection is a vehicle for manifesting experiential knowledge" (Fox, 2011, p. 40).

In sum, the Pictorial Narrative intervention serves as a springboard to open up the therapeutic conversation that allows counselors and clients to think in fresh ways about their lives and careers. The process creates a therapeutic "spaciousness" (Neimeyer, 2009) in which new meanings for old problems can be co-constructed between the client and counselor and in which new possibilities for a preferred future can emerge.

1.2. My career story

A second constructionist career counseling intervention is the My Career Story (MCS) Workbook (Savickas & Hartung, 2012), which utilizes life design theory (Savickas, 2011) to evoke reflection through narrative expression beginning with the client's occupational daydream through the client's life mottos. The MCS Workbook allows clients to formulate and articulate new life

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/5035141>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/5035141>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)