13. THE CAREER CONSTRUCTION INTERVIEW

INTRODUCTION

The Career Construction Interview (CCI) comprises a qualitative assessment method that forms a central component of career construction counselling. Career construction counselling entails an interpersonal process of helping people author career stories that connect their self-concepts to work roles, fit work into life, and make meaning through work (Savickas, 2011). Using the narrative paradigm, career construction counselling begins with a CCI that comprises six questions; one question each about act (counselling goals), actor (personality, self, or social reputation), agent (manifest interests), author (script for linking self to setting), advice (guidance to self), and arc (central problem or preoccupation). Each question prompts individuals to tell small stories about themselves that convey who they are and who they wish to become. The career counsellor and client collaboratively shape the themes culled from these micro-stories into a macro-narrative about the person’s central preoccupation, motives, goals, adaptive strategies, and self-view. In this co-construction process, clients empower themselves to author life-career stories that enhance their experiences of work as personally meaningful and socially useful. They may then use work to actively master what they passively suffer. The present chapter considers the background, content, use, and research evidence in support of the CCI. Readers wanting to learn more about the complete process of career construction counselling may read a definitive book (Savickas, 2011) and chapters (Savickas, 2013; Taber, 2013) as well as study a demonstration of the process (Savickas, 2006).

Background

Sometimes, taking career assessments or tests like interest inventories can be helpful to learn about what kinds of jobs and occupations a person may like and to make choices (for a compendium of such assessments see Wood and Hays, 2013). Career counsellors often use these assessments to help with matching people to jobs. While often helpful for identifying college majors or occupations that might fit a person best, such tests usually tell just one part of the whole life story. To understand themselves more completely and how they can use work to be the persons they want to be, it may help for individuals confronting career transitions and choices to think about their whole life story. Knowing and telling one’s own life story, or autobiography, adds meaning and direction to career plans and decision making.
(Hartung & Taber, 2013; Maree, 2007; Savickas et al., 2009). Increasing the ability to do so forms a central aim of the CCI.

Formerly known as the Career Style Interview (Savickas, 1989) and the Career Story Interview (Savickas, 2011), the CCI offers a different kind of qualitative assessment method because it prompts individuals to tell their life-career stories rather than objectively construe themselves through test scores. Unique among career assessments, the CCI evolved from over 30 years of work by Mark Savickas (1989, 2002, 2011, 2013) to apply career counselling practice to the development of theory; in this case, career construction theory (Savickas, 2002, 2013). Career construction counselling and the CCI in turn follow a rationale based in career construction theory, offer use in diverse settings, and assist individuals to tell, hear, and perform their life-career stories (Savickas, 2011, 2013).

From a narrative perspective, humans make themselves and their worlds through the stories they tell (Bruner, 1987; Ricoeur, 1986; Sarbin, 1986). To best achieve life-career success, then, individuals must create a story about themselves that expresses very clearly who they are as a person, where they would most like to be in the work world, and how they want to use work in a way that best allows them to fully be themselves (Guichard, 2009; Maree, 2007; Savickas, 2002, 2013). To construct such a story, it helps to think of a life-career as an ongoing tale with three main parts: a lead character or self that represents who one is or is becoming, an educational or work setting where a person feels most comfortable, and a script with a plot and a central theme that explains and shows the person how to use work in a way to best realise the self that she or he has constructed. Favourite sayings or mottos support the storyteller in building the confidence needed to construct a career story and early memories indicate the story’s fundamental scheme, plot, or character arc that “portrays where the individual started, is now, and wants to end up on some essential issue” (Savickas, 2013, pp. 165-166). This story-construction and storytelling process begins in childhood (Hartung, in press; Savickas, 2013) as individuals first perform in their families of origin as social actors, then adapt this performance as agents to other contexts like school, work, and community, and ultimately become authors of their own life-career narratives. By listening to their own advice individuals adapt and move on to subsequent episodes in their stories and by recalling early memories they indicate the arc of their character.

**Content and Use**

As seen in Table 13.1, the CCI contains six questions, one question each about act, actor, agent, author, advice, and arc (Savickas, 2011, 2013). As the client relates self-defining responses to the CCI questions, the career counsellor listens closely, asks follow-up questions, and makes reflective statements to clarify meaning. Counsellor and client then use the CCI responses to co-construct a life-career portrait.