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Career Construction Interviewing: ThemeMapping a Client's Story

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Abstract
Often, practitioners are reluctant to utilize client narratives due to a lack of training in detailed application concerning story construction and reconstruction and fear of moving into psychotherapy instead of career guidance or counselling(Lengelle & Meijers, 2012; Reid & West, 2011). In this article, wepresent a working process for organizing, mapping, and building viable co-constructions with clients.We offer theming strategies, schemes, and categories that practitioners can use during the career counselling process to help clients in gaining movement in their career trajectories.

Narrative approaches in career counselling are gaining acceptance and credibility within the profession (Brott, 2001; Hartung, 2013; Lengelle, Meijers, & Hughes, 2016; Maree, 2010a; Rehfuss, 2013; Savickas, 1998, 2011, 2013). With the increased interest in using narrative approaches, researchers have noted that the majority of practitioners are reluctant to utilize client narratives because of a lack of training, detailed application concerning story construction and reconstruction, and fear of moving into psychotherapy instead of career guidance or counselling (Lengelle & Meijers, 2012; Reid & West, 2011). Many researchers and practitioners (Vilhjalmsdottir & Tulinius, 2016; Maree, 2010b, 2013; Savickas, 1998, 2011, 2012; Taber & Briddick, 2011) have attempted to bridge this gap between theory and practice by providing case studies and detailed applications of one specific narrative approach: career construction interviewing.

Career construction interviewing is an approach of narrative career counselling that uses a semi-structured sequence of questions to collect narrative elements from the client. Based on career construction theory (CCT; Savickas, 2011), the semi-structured interview is intended to evoke aspects of the client's career adaptability, identity, interests, values, and general life themes. This involves recording the narrative responses to each question in the interview and, then, deconstructing this data into themes. The remaining step is to construct a career life story through a cooperative process between the counsellor and the client. See Savickas (2011) for detailed procedures for conducting the interview.

Current research (Maree, 2010b, 2013, Rehfuss, Del Corso, Glavin, & Wykes, 2011; Savickas, 1998; Taber & Briddick, 2011) indicates the interview sequence is helpful to career clients and counsellors. Stoltz, Wolff, and McClelland (2011) found the addition of the career construction interview (CCI) to traditional career counselling methods resulted in positive gains in career decision making for rural African-American high school

students. Barclay and Stoltz (2016) found the CCI process useful in group career counselling with academically undecided undergraduate students. These authors noted gains on measures of career maturity and decision-making. Barclay and Wolff (2012) indicated that the CCI process was effective in determining career personality themes. Additionally, Rehfuss, Cosio, and Del Corso, (2011) found that counsellors perceived the use of the interview helpful in working with clients. Specifically, the participant counsellors highlighted client life-theme development and making meaningful career decisions as most helpful.

Although the process and use of the CCI is well documented and described, the narrative aspects of co-constructing descriptions for career adaptability, life themes, and career identity remain challenging to practitioners and students (Lengelle & Meijers, 2012; Reid & West, 2011). Savickas (2011) claimed that counsellors need to develop "narrative competence" (p. 69). Vilhjalmsdottir and Tulinius (2016) stressed the importance of identifying fundamental concepts in the client's stories to aid reflexivity. Moreover, in our collective experience in training doctoral and master's students, we receive consistent student feedback declaring difficulty in arriving at productive and useful narrative themes and stories. The purpose of this article is to provide a guide for deconstruction using theming categories from research with early recollections and autobiographical memories. Additionally, the process provides a strategy for constructing themes to collaborate with clients in re-authoring a new life story. We accomplish this by providing a brief review of the extensive literature on theming narrative materials, ranging from autobiographical memories to complete psychotherapy narratives. In addition, we present common theme development strategies from qualitative research methods. Following a brief explanation of the CCI and existing co-construction strategies (Savickas, 2013; Taber, Hartung, Briddick, Briddick, & Rehfuss, 2011), we detail a mapping scheme that allows the counsellor to assemble the narrative data into thematic categories created from the CCI questions. From this map, the counsellor and client organize a graphic co-construction of client stories, which becomes a physical representation intended to aid in the creation of a new client narrative.

To be clear, we view this process as an integration of qualitative research strategies, narrative counselling, and career counselling. Reid and West (2011) discussed the difficulties of limiting a narrative approach to career guidance. Career guidance is based on an empirical and logical approach and usually involves test scores comparing the individual to group norms (Savickas, 2011). Career counselling incorporates many aspects of other forms of counselling (e.g., negative thinking, emotion) and aids clients to think holistically about career (Peterson, Sampson, Lenz, & Reardon, 2002; Hartung, 2013). In this article, we embrace the concepts expressed by Blustein and Spengler (1995), who posited that counselling includes both career and personal dimensions. These authors avoided the categorical nomenclature of career or personal counselling by suggesting the term *domain* (career, personal, relationship) to represent the focus of the counselling. Many authors (Betz & Corning, 1993; Krumboltz, 1993, Zunker, 2008) provided further elaboration of the difficulty in conceptualizing career counselling as separate from other forms of counselling.

However, the focus of career guidance is clearly different from career counselling, and we are presenting this mapping technique for use in career counselling using the narrative CCI process.

Much of the narrative career development literature focuses on client identity, adaptability, and life themes. The very nature of these constructs entails domains from other domains of counselling (e.g., early life experiences, family relationships, developmental tasks, projective techniques). Thus, we posit, as many before us, that career and other types of counselling are not mutually exclusive and often co-occur, especially when using client narratives. Although we promote this integration, we recognize that many career counsellors may not possess experience or training in treating mental health issues. We do support and recognize ethical obligations to make appropriate referrals for more targeted treatment of mental health issues identified in this process (e.g., trauma, clinical depression, anxiety disorders). Although the narrative approach might present challenges in limiting counselling to the career domain, in this article, we use a mapping process as a way of integrating other domains (e.g., life themes, developmental tasks, stress coping) but focus particularly on the career application aspects (e.g., career identity, career adaptability).

Stranding, Theming, and Storying: Mapping Narrative Elements

Reviewing counselling and psychotherapy content for themes is an historic, yet emerging, practice in the helping professions (Bruhn, 1984; Clark, 2013; Meier, Bolvin, & Meier, 2008; Singer & Bonalume, 2010). Exploring themes in psychotherapy and counselling is a unique and specific method of understanding a client's verbal and behavioural content (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Braun and Clarke (2006) posited that theme analysis is a systematic approach for exploring and reporting patterns and relationships in data collected from clients. The process borrows methods from qualitative research and incorporates the processes of rich description, inductive and deductive reasoning, and specific epistemologies (e.g., constructivist). Braun and Clarke discussed the typical qualitative research processes of exploring data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing and naming themes, and developing reports. Several theming systems (Meier et al., 2008; Singer & Bonalume, 2008; Thorne & McLean, 2001) represent attempts to detail and explain the process of developing reliable themes across psychotherapy sessions for research and therapeutic purposes.

Using autobiographical memories (ABMs), Singer and Bonalume (2010) described a system of reviewing client stories concerning past and recent life events. This review process entails dividing the transcribed psychotherapy sessions into segmented topics within the session content. After identifying each topic, the researchers suggest identifying each narrative for complexity (e.g., completeness of story, causal links, timeline, context, and emotions). Researchers use the narratives that hold many of these story elements (rated three or higher on a five point scale) for analysis.

Analysis begins with determining the story as an ABM different from a non-ABM. The ABM is a story that contains "direct personal experience" (Singer & Bonalume, 2010, p.174), not stories told by others to the

client (a non-ABM). These personal experience stories are the narratives utilized for theming with the dimensions of specificity, meaning, and affect. *Specificity* represents the detail and integration of the story, including time, self-in-context, and unique occurrence (Singer & Bonalume, 2010). *Meaning* signifies attempts to qualify a person's use of the memory to create purpose and significance (e.g., making personal sense from the event). *Affect* includes the emotional aspects of the event from past to present. The system also includes Thorne and McLean's (2001) scheme for scoring the types of narratives or specific content (i.e., life threatening events, recreation/exploration leisure events, relationship events, achievement events, guilt/shame, doing wrong vs. doing right events, drug, alcohol, tobacco use events, and events unclassifiable). Content is a categorical assignment of the memory events that include type of events as outlined by Thorne and McLean. Although used in psychotherapy research, many of the theming categories included in this model overlap with career domains, especially with the use of identifying thematic material (e.g., preoccupation, emotion) in career work (Maree, 2010b; Savickas, 1998, 2012; Vilhjalmsdottir & Tulinius, 2016).

Thorne, McLean, and Lawrence (2004) conducted a study concerning early memories and reflecting. These authors used the self-defining memory questionnaire (Singer & Saloney, 1993) to collect early memory data from college students. Thorne et al. (2004) collected 504 memory narratives, and they coded each narrative using the theming system derived by Thorne and McLean (2001, 2002). This system provided four narrative event categories (relationship, mortality, achievement, leisure events) from the original eight outlined previously. Also included were categories of tension, meaning, gaining insight versus lessons learned, and reporting of listener responses (positive, negative) to the narrative, and whether participants told the narrative to others prior to the study. Thorne et al. found a modest, yet positive, relationship between the reporting of tension in a narrative and the construction of meaning. This indicated that tension and stressful events might promote meaning making and adaption, similar to Savickas's (2002) conceptualization of mild, moderate, and severe disharmony in career identity match to career environments. Additionally, this meaning making process is synonymous with reflexivity noted in process research using narratives (Vilhjalmsdottir & Tulinius, 2016).

Those narratives that were mortality-based had the highest amounts of meaning associated with the event. There was equal distribution of meaning between the memory events that had been shared previously and those not shared previously, indicating that meaning making can be either an individual or a shared experience. Thorne et al. (2004) reasoned that when individuals experience positive life events, they need little social support, and these events do not necessarily lead to meaning making transformative experiences. However, the experience of negative events showed benefit from social support for managing the negative emotional experiences associated with these events. This story telling can lead to significant meaning making as the person explores and narrates life insights. Furthermore, these researchers found story recipients (i.e., supporters hearing the story) who responded with positive versus negative responses were helpful in assisting the narrator to make meaning of the events. This research

highlights the significance of tension as a theming category and draws attention to the process of counsellors (as listeners) being open to and promoting positive reflection concerning the story and ultimate meaning for the clients' lives. This process is certainly present and active in the career domains as represented by Maree (2010b, 2013) and Savickas (2011).

Meier et al. (2008) described a theme analysis procedure using a hierarchical theming system consisting of four levels of themes (descriptive themes, second-order themes, third-order themes, and core themes). *Descriptive themes*, the most basic, represent the client's concerns and specific experiences. These include emotions, thoughts, perceptions, needs and lamentations, and other specifics and represent the basic elements or deconstructed elements of a story. To arrive at descriptive themes, the focus is on unique feelings, perceptions, needs, wants and goals, thoughts, and experiences. In organizing these, counsellors use a continuum from least to most (e.g., feeling relaxed to feeling anxious). The description is reduced to these bi-polar dimensions and accompany the object of the experience (e.g., anxious when talking with supervisor). The supervisor is the object in this example.

Counsellors form *second-order themes* by combining descriptive themes that are similar (e.g., events that describe common occurrences, such as not stating needs, feeling ignored or unrecognized). This represents preliminary co-construction as the counsellor notes commonalities across narratives. Compiling second-order themes into common blocks is the process of developing *third-order themes*. Looking for relationships between second-order themes and grouping them under a generalized category that represents the common aspects of the second-order themes draws attention to the overall descriptor for the third-order category (e.g., not stating feelings might be categorized into behaviours in relating, and feeling unrecognized or ignored might be categorized into cognitive responses to social interactions). This is another step in co-constructing the overall theme from the narratives.

After placing all the descriptive themes into second-order and third order categories, counsellors are able to develop a *core theme*. The core theme represents the relationships between all the third-order categories. For example, a theme of *lacking assertiveness* might represent behaviours in relating and cognitive responses to social interactions. This hierarchical organization allows for the compilation of themes to come directly from the client's narrative story. The core or life theme, then, informs the counsellor about the organizing framework or dynamic structure of the individual's thinking, behaviour, and emotionality. This is the focus of treatment in psychotherapy and counselling, and career counsellors can conceptualize this as the pre-occupation noted by Savickas (2011). Once identified, the counsellor uses the pre-occupation to help the client make meaning of the events and construct an occupation that actualizes this meaning.

The theming models presented offer insights into how to deconstruct and co-construct client narratives. Attending to the specificity and complexity of the narrative can provide insights into the client's identity development (McAdams, 1985; McAdams & McLean, 2013). Organizing narratives into specific themes helps to identify tension and meaning and can indicate personal value systems. Finally,

learning to use a hierarchical structure to organize client stories assists in defining primary difficulties or challenges for the client. Counsellors might conceptualize these as the life themes or preoccupations as described by both Savickas (2011) and Maree (2010b).

One additional section of the literature related closely to the CCI is the use of early recollections as conceptualized by Adler (as cited in Ansbacher & Ansbacher, 1979). According to Adler, early recollections represent overall life themes (lifestyle) and include degrees of activity, purposeful behaviours, and attitudes toward social tasks. Understanding the assessment and translation of early memory stories in psychotherapy is a long-standing tradition of the Individual Psychology approach of Adler.

Manaster and Perryman (1973, 1974) developed a system for theming early recollection material to help practitioners develop lifestyle themes. They included characters (e.g. mother father, siblings, pets), theme of the memory (e.g., death of a loved one, disagreement or conflict), sensory detail (e.g., visual, auditory), setting (e.g., home, school, outdoors), mode of interaction (e.g., active versus passive), perception of event (e.g., internal locus versus external locus of control), and affect (e.g., happy, sad, scared). Review of these categories helps practitioners assess a client's lifestyle that includes life themes and perceptions of the world. Counsellors can use these categories, although altered and revised, in career construction counselling to identify life themes (preoccupations), career adaptability (problem solving strategies), and career identity (values and worldview).

In summary, the various theming systems reviewed above, although thorough and extensive, cannot address all aspects of the client's narrative. However, these systems can broaden and deepen the analysis process of client narratives and assist counsellors, using the various categories, to help clients understand identity and use of early memory stories in forming plans and commitments concerning the career domain.

Themes and the CCI

In the career construction interview (CCI), many memories and current experiences, as cultivated by the interview questions, aid the client in building and constructing a career story. Savickas (2011) explained that counsellors need to witness the client's stories and relate the personal meaning back to the client to address the original reason for seeking counselling. Then, the counsellor must be able to draw relationships accentuating meaning for the client, expose themes for career and life design, and extend the story into the future. This process includes drawing from past and present stories (micro-narratives) to develop a macro-narrative that portrays a career story with greater coherence, continuity, and complexity. According to Savickas (2011), specific categories for story construction include "self, setting, script, and strategy" (p. 68). Additionally, Vilhjalmsdottir and Tulinius (2016) provided guidance in understanding story conflict, relationships, and motivations in the story. The theming schemes discussed earlier reflect several of these categories. These categories become a framework for listening to the story and organizing elements of the narrative.

Several components outlined in the various theming approaches presented earlier represent categories offered by

Savickas (2011). The client's descriptions and traits of favoured characteristics in the narrative represent *self*. Helping the client report actual memories, and not stories about the client, is an important aspect of assessing the self. More important is the concept of self and personal identity that emerges from the story (McAdams, 1985, McAdams & McLean, 2013). Listening for themes across stories helps counsellors develop a sense of the client's identity.

Setting is a category discussed by both Singer and Bonalume (2010) and Manaster and Perryman (1973, 1974). Singer and Bonalume described assessing for the self immersed in the context. Manaster and Perryman included context as the frame in which the story unfolds. Other aspects help to build the elements of context (e.g., are there other people [Characters] in the memory? Does the client describe aspects [e.g., smells, visual cues] of the context in detail?).

Script is the most noted of the categories. The script represents the client's role and the sequence of events in the story. Thorne and McLean (2001) offered the most complete list of categories for types of scripts (e.g., life threatening events, recreation/exploration events). Review of these categories simply assists the practitioner in identifying the type of event and how the client perceives the event. The script concept goes deeper into the interaction and focuses on the happening and processing of the client. Much of the life themes emerge from listening to the telling of the events. Listening for the client's emotional reactions (Manaster & Perryman, 1973, 1974; Singer & Bonalume, 2010) and meaning making responses (Singer & Bonalume) are important concepts in the process of helping the client tell and re-story life events.

Strategy, from an Individual Psychology (Ansbacher & Ansbacher, 1979) perspective, represents the total movement of the client. This movement is the client's way of perceiving, being, and reacting to the world. Savickas (2011) stated that the strategy is the way the client enacts the script within the context. From the story, the counsellor gleans the strategy or movement of the client. This movement represents the way the client deals with the tasks, relationships, or challenges presented in the memory.

These seemingly four simple categories (self, script, setting, and strategy) outline elements in the client's story. The counsellor must listen, garner understanding from the story, and narrate this back to the client in a collaborative process helping the client gain skill in developing narrative chapters for future life events. This process goes beyond basic counselling skills and includes interpretation and realigning elements of the client's story so the client can begin to conceptualize new chapters.

This theming process is the cornerstone of the CCI. The ability to develop useful themes that capture the client's experiences, values, emotions, and beliefs is crucial to success in using this narrative approach. To aid in this process, we outline the CCI questions below and suggest theming processes derived from the literature presented above.

Career Construction Interview: Questions and Themes

Clearly, the CCI is a narrative approach that taps the domains of mental

health and career functioning simultaneously. In this section, we present the CCI questions, along with theming concepts that are relevant from the psychotherapy literature, to aid counsellors in mapping the client's career self-construction.

Client Concern or Problem in Enacting the Self-Concept

The first question (Tell me how I might be helpful to you in constructing your career) of the CCI is an inquiry about how the counsellor might be helpful to the client in constructing his or her career. This question focuses on defining the problem or task offered by the client. Furthermore, this question provides the counsellor with the client's present context and, perhaps, emotional reactions to the problem or task. Counsellors must return to the presenting problem after assembling the microstories into a macrostory. Theming for the problem might include the client's self, context, relationships, timeline, completeness, and tension. These categories help the counsellor listen to and categorize aspects of the client's presenting problem so that, together, they can reconstruct a narrative into a career story with goals to address the problem.

What are salient aspects of the client's self-concept?

The second question (Describe the people you admired when you were a child. These might be real people or fictional characters) addresses aspects of the self-concept by asking about role models admired as a child. By asking about role models, the counsellor is hoping to propagate narrative about the client's self-concept. Theming categories include values, morals, and ways of addressing life problems and moving through life (e.g., strategy and reflexivity).

What are the interests of the client?

This question (Tell me what magazines you read, the television shows you watch, and the websites you visit regularly. What, in particular do you like about each?) addresses major interests of the client. Also assessed is the tension between acting on the interests and the social opportunities and self-assessed abilities to act on the interests. The theming categories used here are very familiar to counsellors. The RIASEC codes from Holland (1992) become a focus for theming. Furthermore, using the specific categories of values, self-concept, rewards, personal style, and self-expression taken from the Self-Directed Search *You and Your Career* brochure (Holland, 1994) are helpful in understanding the client's expressed interests. Additionally, using Prediger's (1982) dimensions (people-things and ideas-data) is helpful in understanding the client's broad orientations to work. Finally, understanding the tension between actualizing the interests and opportunities is important. Specifically, what restricts the client from pursuing interests?

What is the client's script?

With the next question (What is your favourite story? Tell me about the plot.), the counsellor inquires about the client's current favourite story. From this question, the counsellor is attempting to discover how the client brings self and identity to the projects and settings housed in the person's interests (Savickas, 2011). The counsellor instructs the client to tell the favourite story and listens for how the client develops a personal interpretation of the tale. The counsellor listens for the descriptions of how

the characters move and negotiate the conflicts or climax of the story. These descriptors are the script used by the client to negotiate life and conflict. Furthermore, the main character in the story usually has a demeanour and specific values. These can often be associated with the client's identity and strategies for addressing perceived difficulties.

What is the self-talk for facing life challenges?

To answer this question (What is your favourite motto or saying?), the counsellor searches for advice the client uses to face life challenges. The counsellor requests a favourite motto or saying and uses this content during re-storying. The motto might represent encouragement, hope, and expectancy. The client uses the self-talk to cope with current and future challenges. Thus, enlisting the client's self-guidance becomes a powerful force for encouragement in the new story construction.

What is the worldview?

Often in early memories, clients report stories of pain, discouragement, and disappointment, but other memories may present happiness and contentment. The centrality of these stories represents the pre-occupation or worldview in the client's life story. Asking about early memories and a headline is the next part of the interview sequence (Please give me three early recollections. These should be memories rather than stories others have told you. Who is in the memory? What is happening? If the story were published in a local newspaper, what would be the headline?). Counsellors elicit the memories by asking the client to recount three early memories along with a phrase or headline that captures the primary theme of each memory. The headline presents a clear theme of the perspective or worldview the client constructs concerning the story. These early life events hold many of the theming categories presented in this article. The theming of the memories is very important to understanding what themes the client evokes when facing life tasks, challenges, or adversity.

Counsellors consider use of theming for specificity, completeness, causal links, and emotions (Singer & Bonalume, 2010), type of event (Thorne & McLean, 2001), tension and meaning making (Singer & Bonalume; Thorne & McLean), characters, theme, sensory detail, setting, mode of interaction, perception of events, and affect (Manaster & Perryman, 1974) when hearing and interpreting these micro-narratives. The memories are cumulative and contain aspects of the self, setting, script, and strategy described by Savickas (2011). The compilations of these stories provide a holistic worldview. From the theming categories, the counsellor engages in building a story that represents the client's generalized view of life and the world. Using specific story elements and the theming of Meier et al. (2008) is helpful in building a cohesive and integrated view that the client can understand as an interpretive lens for life events. From this point, the counsellor shares this constructed worldview with the client and begins to build a new narrative to address the client's presenting problem or main concern for seeking assistance.

Cartography of Client's Stories: Building the Map

We suggest organizing the story elements from the CCI. First, recording all

the CCI responses from the interview sequence is important. Recording of the narratives should be as accurate as possible using the client's actual words. Metaphors and specific words or phrases are key aspects of building a re-constructed story with the client. Once all recording is complete, the counsellor begins by underlining, circling, or highlighting specific words or phrases identifying descriptive themes. Counsellors might do this with the client or independent of the client and, then, present to the client in later sessions. Developing thematic links (e.g., underlining, circling, highlighting) shows the relationships among the themes in the various micronarratives and culminate into the second and third order life themes that represent various aspects of the client's general approaches to life tasks and problems in career transitions. Finally, taking the themes from the third order themes and creating core themes helps formulate the re-storying.

Beginning with the first question, the counsellor reviews the responses and starts identifying descriptive words and phrases. In the example (see Figures 1, 2, & 3), we used numbers, underlining, and symbols to show the relationships of descriptive themes to the second and third order theming categories. The counsellor repeats this process using the categories proposed for each CCI question. The intent of this process is to organize the categories in hierarchal fashion similar to Meier et al. (2008). There might be cause with some narratives to list or develop a new theme or use a category from another question. Once the counsellor reviews and identifies all the second and third level categories for all the questions, the deconstruction process is complete. Review might help to refine and draw further themes or relationships from the categories, similar to the recursive processes outlined in qualitative research.

Reviewing the deconstructed elements and identifying relationships is the first step in reconstruction (see Figure 4 – ThemeMap Example). Identifying the relationships with colour coding, arrows, or some scheme helps highlight emerging themes. Also, reviewing for narrative aspects of identity, adaptability, values, and interests supports in re-constructing a narrative with the client. Reviewing these narrative building materials aids in reminding the client of the elements and can lead to clarifications. Counsellors can accomplish this by mapping the themes and phrases onto the ThemeMapping scheme. This scheme provides a visual aid for the client to see and review the narrative material, along with the counsellor, and provides an organizing frame for the narrative material. Counsellors use this as a direct reference when re-constructing the client's new narrative. In the example (see Figure 4), the map highlights the repetitive nature of themes (e.g., pressure, frustration). These are examples of what Meier et al. (2008) called descriptive themes. The culmination of these descriptive themes creates the second-order theme of emotional reaction and a third order theme conceptualized as stress. For this example, client decision-making events seem to be present in key examples given during the interview. The core theme might be labelled as stress resulting from forced choice decision-making. Rather than identifying this as a negative trait, we suggest that the experience of distress and pressure, derived from the presentation of a forced choice (e.g. ice cream flavours, known career choices without exploration) becomes a signal to the client for enlisting his hero, Iron Man, to use intellect, problem-solving

skills, and decision-making confidence. This becomes part of the new story construction for the client.

Review of the example reveals additional descriptive codes (e.g., smart, intellect, visionary, influential, creativity). These descriptive codes might be combined into a desired personal style. This personal style becomes the way of movement for the client to practice and enhance during career exploration. The core theme coalesces into an entrepreneurial artistic self-concept. Again, this would be re-narrated into the new story for the client.

From these highlighted relationships (second and third order themes) in the narrative elements (descriptive themes), the counsellor and the client begin to build new narrative elements by identifying important strengths (adaptability), identity elements, and meaning demonstrating the core themes used for story reconstruction. Building from these narrative themes, the counsellor and client develop new chapter outlines addressing the needs of the client. Savickas (2015) calls this a "unifying life portrait" (p. 65). This portrait includes goal statements and conceptualized strengths that draw from the many theming elements presented in this article. The client's experiences, coping strategies, and strengths converge into new narratives helping the client to gain confidence and self-understanding in facing the life challenges stated at the outset of the session (see Table 1).

Although this is a qualitative and narrative process, counselors can use specific processes to support credibility when co-constructing the interpretation with the client. This includes processes of checking in regularly with the client concerning interpretations, triangulating the narrative responses with other data (e.g., quantitative assessments, interview data) looking for confirmatory and non-confirmatory data, and self-monitoring through peer supervision to guard against personal biases when interpretation (Stoltz, Bell, & Mazahreh, 2019).

Conclusion

In this article, we reviewed various theming strategies and schemes for studying client narratives from the psychotherapy and counselling literature. We described these theming categories in the context and application of the CCI. By applying these theming categories to the micro-stories derived from the CCI questions, counsellors can gain efficacy and skill for generating future career narratives with clients. Although intended for the idiographic application of career construction, practitioners can use these theming categories to construct nomothetic research designs to understand narrative content better within groups. Generating databases of narratives and theming categories may reveal patterns in data that presently go unnoticed in idiographic applications.

In summary, our purpose in writing this article was to provide support and a strategy to counsellors who have trouble in developing post-session narratives that help the client cultivate meaning and hope, and inventorying skills, abilities and self-knowledge. These elements are intended to help the client transition into developing future career stories. Finally, we believe that by using these theming strategies, borrowed from mental health research, practitioners can make links that demonstrate the inseparable nature of career and mental health work.

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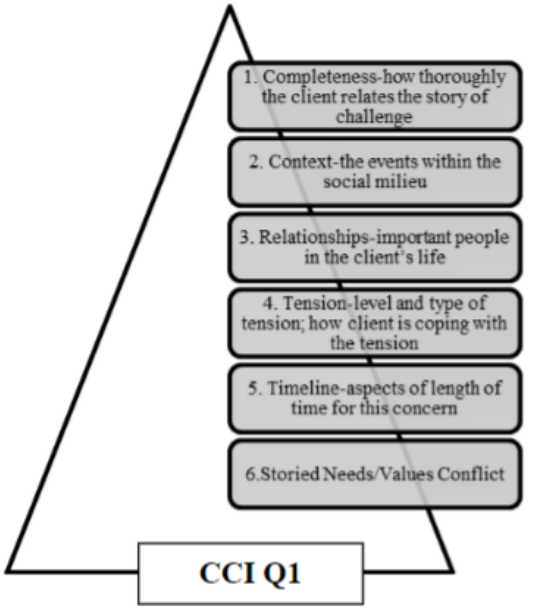
Table 1

CCI Question	Sample of Some of the Coding Cue(s)	Storied Theme(s)	Reconstructed Narrative
6-ERs	Context; perception of events; relationships; strategies; tension; storied needs/values conflict	Aesthetics (beautiful; shining sun); helping others; forced choice (vanilla vs. strawberry ice cream); lack of options in choice; paralyzed (cannot decide); pressure; frustration; parents	When confronted with limited options you often feel pressure to decide and "move on" to the goal at hand. This stress is enhanced when people important in your life are requesting a decision, similar to your headline, "under strong pressure, I cannot decide!"
1-Role Models	Values; strategies; storied needs/values conflict; movement	Intellectual; smart; brains; problem solving; leading; visionary; influence; success	This is frustrating for you as you strive to use your intellect and abilities to solve problems, similar to Iron Man. You have a vision for your life that includes influence and success, and not being able to decide thwarts these characteristics.
3-Interests	RIASEC; people/things; ideas/data; personal style; rewards; self-concept; self-expression; tension	Entrepreneurial; global influence; film/video; fantasy/anime; possibilities; problem-solving and saving/helping people; non-traditional methods of influence	You want to enact your vision by being influential and making a meaningful difference in people's lives. This might include using your artistic and technological abilities and interests to create solutions for complex human problems.
4-Favorite Story	Climax; context; relationships; tension; values; storied needs/values conflict	Leadership; helping and protecting employees (knights) and community (Camelot); humility, kindness, merciful; aggressive only when necessary; heroic and just	Similar to King Arthur, you want to approach these human problems by influencing a small group of peers to work towards meaningful solutions. You believe in humility, kindness, and collaboration, and understand sometimes you may have to be assertive to make progress toward your goals.
5-Motto	Outlook; strategies; storied needs/values conflict	Flexibility; freedom; unrestricted; less pressure around decisions due to the values of flexibility, freedom, and decreased restriction	You believe that life is full of possibilities and you tell yourself that "Life is whatever you want it to be."
1-Presenting concern	Context; relationships; tension; timeline; storied needs/values conflict	Distressed/frustrated; pressure to make a forced-choice decision (now vs. later); paralyzed (cannot decide); parents	To engage in finding a solution you will look for those possibilities, beyond those presented and engage the Knights of the round table (external resources) and your Iron Man intellect to help you explore possibilities.
Through reconstructing the narrative, the client and counselor began conceptualizing ways in which the client might form a career by exploring areas like film and anime for spreading important social messages to the world. Both understood that the client valued and needed flexibility and possibilities, both in life and in a career. When faced with limited choices, the client experiences both the pressure of making an immediate decision and the restriction of forced choices that do not include other possibilities. Such situations "freeze" the client; his cognition shuts down, and he is unable to make an immediate decision. Throughout the next few sessions together, the client and the counselor spent time utilizing tools and search functions on the O*Net Online website. Through that, and other resources, the client was able to identify career information concerning the visual arts. This led him to selecting an academic major in digital media.			

Figure 1.

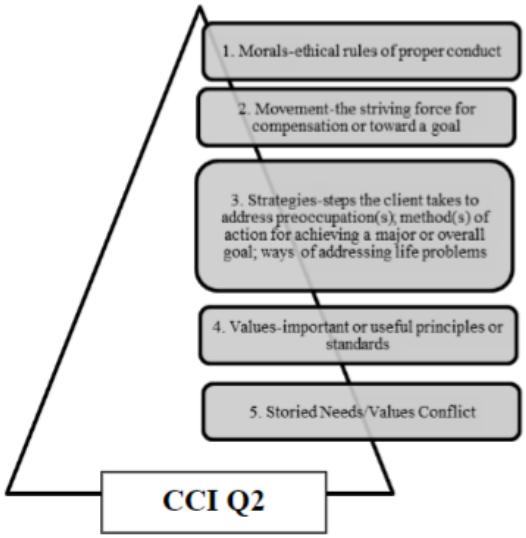
Identifying Descriptive, Second and Third Order Themes for CCI Q1-2



CCI Q1 Response

Well, I have been very distressed(4, *) with deciding(4) how to proceed in school. I am feeling a lot of pressure from my parents(2,3) to identify a program and pursue a degree,(#) but I just cannot think of anything that interests me.(4, 6, ^, ~) I know I need(&) to make a choice soon and move on,(5,#) but honestly, nothing really comes to mind(6) for me. That is why I am here, to decide how to proceed.(6)

The overall story involves completeness(1). In addition, the story conveys emotion(*), movement(#), conflict(^),outlook(~), and morals(&).



CCI Q2 Response

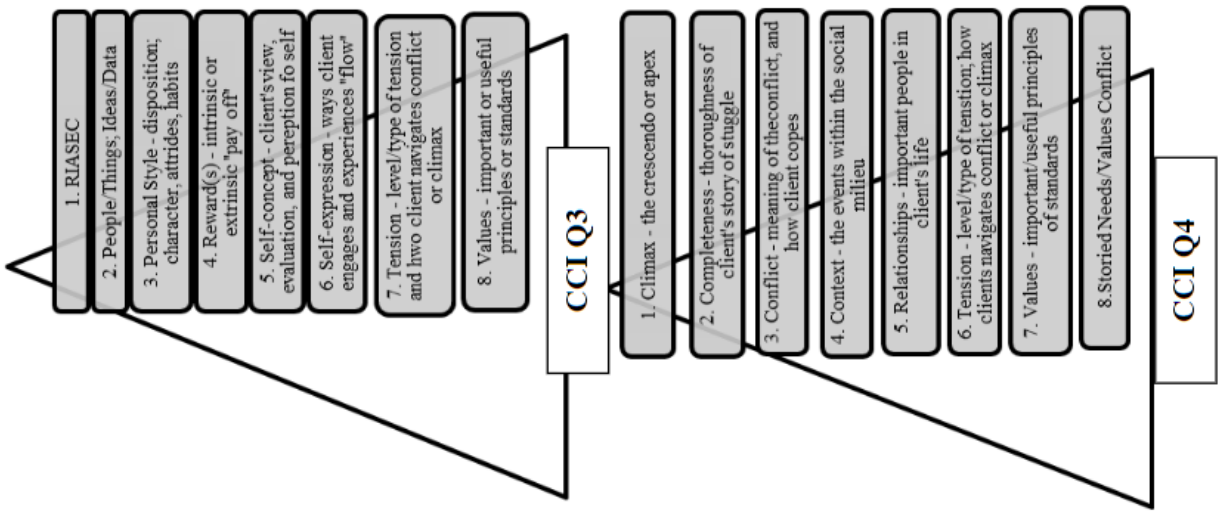
Iron Man – He is really smart(4,*) and uses his intellect to solve problems(4,*). He is a leader(4,*) and uses force when necessary (1,3,4), but relies on his brains(4) most of the time. He also runs a successful company. I would like to do that(4,*).

Steve Jobs – He knew what he wanted to do(2,3,5) and had a personal vision(2,3,5,*) for the world. He was able to have influence(2,3,4,5,*) across the globe and was very successful(2,3,4,5,*), in spite of dropping out of college.

The overall response relates to the additional coding cues of completeness, specificity, and personal style(*).

Figure 2.

Identifying Descriptive, Second and Third Order Themes for CCI Q3-4



CCI Q3 Response

I read *Inc*.(1) I know that sounds crazy for a person my age, but I think about the influence(1,2,3,8,*) Steve Jobs had, and I admire him for that. I want to make a difference, too,(1,2,4,5,8,*) and I learn a lot about entrepreneurial business(1,2,3) from a global perspective(4,6,8) in *Inc*. I don't watch a lot of TV, but I do watch online films(1,2) and YouTube videos(1,2). I really like anime(1,6). I think use of anime is a great way to tell a story from more of a fantasy(1,6) position that can be translated(2,4,6) as real life…you know, something possible. Anime characters can be anyone the author choses them to be.(6) I really like how anime mimics old-time comics except anime is more like comics brought to life.(4,6) Usually there is a main character who has to problem-solve(1,4,8) and save people(1,2,3,4,8) from some impending doom.

The overall response relates to the additional coding cue of meaning-making(*).

CCI Q4 Response

King Arthur and Knights of the Roundtable is my favorite story! King Arthur was a leader(4,7), both in Camelot(4,5,) and in relation to the Knights of the Roundtable(5). He charged the knights with being humble, kind, and merciful(4,5,7), but also to protect what needed protecting(2,4,6,8). Much like Iron Man, King Arthur used force only when necessary(2,4,6,8), and he charged the knights to do the same. Probably one of his biggest feats was protecting the people of Camelot by staving off a Saxon invasion(1,4,5,6). He was heroic and just(1,2,4,7).

Figure 3.

Identifying Descriptive, Second and Third Order Themes for CCI Q5-6

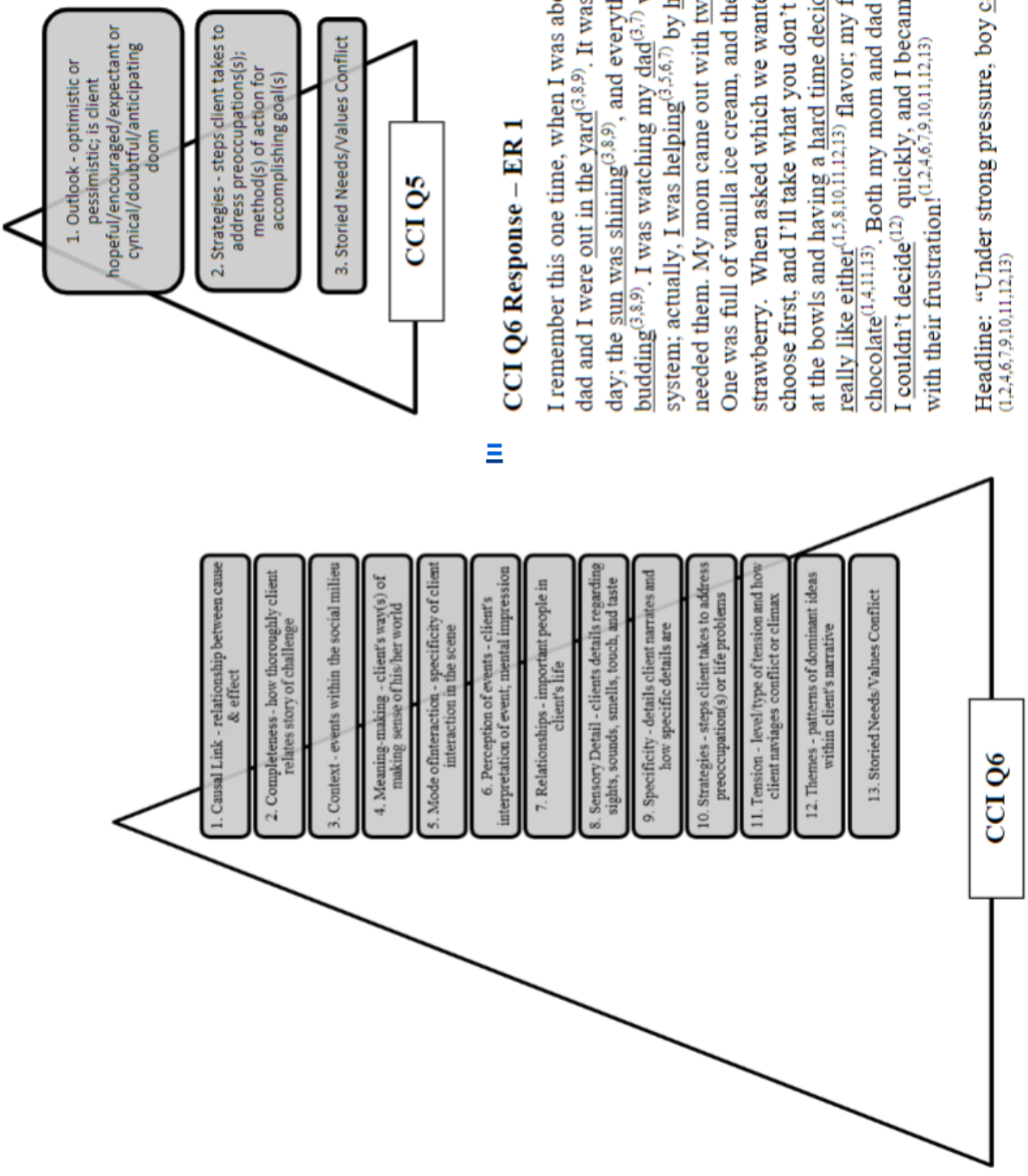


Figure 4.

Client ThemeMap Example

Sample of associated Coding Cue(s) → → →	Emotions	Personal Style	Relationships	RIASEC	Sensory Detail	Themes	Values	Storied Needs/Values Conflict
Q1 – Presenting Concern	Distressed; pressured		Parents			Relationships; helping/saving people		Pressure; indecisive
Q2 – Role Model (adjectives)		Smart; problem solver; forceful (only when necessary); successful; visionary; decisive; influential	Employees; global	Problem solving; leadership; influential; visionary; success; intelligence		Problem solving; leadership; influential; visionary	Leadership; influence; intelligence	Knowing what to do; having a vision; being influential; success
Q3 – Activities			Influential; saving people	Something that will be influential; film/videos; entrepreneurial; anime; saving people	Anime; film; fantasy	Influence; making meaning; leadership; film/anime	Global consideration	Needs flexibility in work; possibilities; ability to help others
Q4 - Story		Leader; humble; kind; merciful; just; heroic	Knights of the Roundtable; the people of Camelot	Leadership		Influential; leader; protector	Leadership; humility; kindness; justice	
Q5 - Motto		Intellect (to make life whatever)					Possibilities; flexibility; lack of restriction	Needs flexibility; life with possibilities
Q6 – ERs (verbs)	Frustration; pressured		Dad; helping others	Aesthetics; helping	Beautiful spring day; sun shining	Helping others	Helping; aesthetics	Deciding; couldn't decide; pressure

Note: The associated coding cues in this figure represent only a sample of all ThemeMapping cues developed by Stoltz and Barclay (2015).