

This book is the definitive “how-to” guide to career construction counseling. It is clearly written, succinct, grounded in theory and research evidence, and eminently practical. Cardoso and Hartung have written an essential handbook for practitioners and scholars in the field of career development. The book is ideal compulsory reading for courses in career counseling.

—**Peter McIlveen, PhD**, Professor, University of Southern Queensland, Toowoomba, Australia; Fellow of the College of Counselling Psychologists, Australian Psychological Society

Understanding how change happens is essential to promoting a dignified future for all. The authors address this with mastery and incisiveness.

—**Laura Nota, PhD**, Full Professor, University of Padova, Larios Laboratory, Padua, Italy

This volume embodies what I value most in our profession: the integration of rigorous scholarship with genuine human concern. It serves as a treasure trove of guidance and inspiration for counselors committed to making a lasting difference in people’s lives.

—**Kobus Maree, DEd, PhD, DPhil**, Full Professor, Department of Educational Psychology, University of Pretoria, Pretoria, South Africa

Far beyond a practical case study, this is an enhanced manual that is greatly needed by practitioners. In this book that is shaped by research and supportive models, readers will find client narratives and therapeutic dialogues to help compel personal growth and innovation, and manage dilemmas. Cardoso and Hartung are masters at combining the best of career counseling and vocational behavior change.

—**Rich Feller, PhD**, Professor and University Distinguished Teaching Scholar, Colorado State University, Fort Collins, United States

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1 CAREER CONSTRUCTION COUNSELING

Origins and Practice Method

People use stories to organize their lives, construct their identities, and make sense of their problems.

—M. L. Savickas (2019b, p. 4)

Every life is worth a novel (Polster, 1987), and every life is novel. Recognizing these truths, career construction counseling (CCC; Savickas, 2019c) uses narrative methods in an interpersonal process of supporting individuals to tell, understand, and author the next chapter of their unique career stories. The word “supporting” is used deliberately to indicate that the counselor facilitates and encourages client self-exploration and change rather than serving as the expert on the client’s problems. From the perspective of CCC, counseling does not change the client. Change comes from within clients who “use counseling to make themselves more whole, more themselves by removing barriers that have blocked them from better knowing themselves and their situations” (Savickas, 2019a, p. 7). In so doing, CCC considers work as a backdrop for enacting a life story. By knowing and telling their life stories, clients add greater meaning and purpose to their career and work-based

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Facilitating Change in Career Construction Counseling, by P. M. Cardoso and P. J. Hartung

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choices and plans. By listening to the inner wisdom of their stories, clients shape their identities in the form of self-defining autobiographical narratives. These narratives hold and carry them through times of transition and instability. To situate CCC in context, this chapter outlines the origins and advancement of career construction as a practice method and conceptual framework for understanding and supporting clients encountering career transitions and choices to tell, hear, retell, and enact with greater purpose their own life-career stories. After tracing the roots of CCC, the chapter describes the basic intervention protocol and core practice method for career construction.

ORIGINS OF CAREER CONSTRUCTION COUNSELING

CCC resulted from the pioneering work of Mark L. Savickas (for biographical references, see BUCareerDevelopmentLab, 2015; Collin, 2001; Vess & Lara, 2016). Savickas initially drew from Adlerian counseling and psychotherapy principles and practices, particularly the Adlerian focus on early memory narratives and lifestyle assessment. He also incorporated the focus on narrative in Super's (1957) lifespan, life-space theory of careers that drew from Bühler's (1933) work on developmental tasks and stages identified in life histories. Super (1985) advanced this work in the Career Pattern Study by collecting life history data to capture the rich context and storied nature of human life-careers. In developing the thematic-extrapolation method (TEM), Super (1954) offered an early narrative career intervention for ascertaining life themes to promote vocational choice and development. The TEM combined career pattern and life history data in a chronological sequence that permitted identifying and interpreting recurring themes in an individual life-career story (Jepsen, 1994). Savickas's (2019a) book on career construction theory (CCT) reflected, consolidated, and advanced this emphasis on life themes and career patterns in CCC.

Recognizing the value of narrative and psychological constructivist approaches to career practice and theory, Savickas, following from Super, later used George Kelly's (1955) personal construct theory (Neimeyer, 1992) and biographical hermeneutic approaches (Bujold, 1990; Collin & Young, 1988; Young & Collin, 1988) to sharpen the focus of CCC on meaning making, life themes, and narrative (Savickas, 1997). Kelly (1955), who emphasized vocation as a prime vehicle through which people give meaning to their lives, spawned a line of constructivist and narrative career theory, research, and

practice (see Hartung, 2013). Eventually, Savickas (2002) replaced psychological constructivism with social constructionism as the central epistemological base of CCC, as well as CCT, and increased the focus on narrative in his seminal first formal statement of career construction theory and practice. Constructivism and constructionism both portray human experience as incoherent and variable. They also hold that meaning resides in the words people use to describe and explain their experiences, rather than in the world. *Psychological constructivism*, however, views people as scientists who use cognition to interpret their experiences and make sense of the world, whereas *social constructionism* views people as storytellers who use narrative and relationships to coconstruct meaning through dialogue (Collin & Guichard, 2011). The narrative coconstruction process between client and counselor forms a central element of CCC. Savickas (2019b) deliberately named the system he developed career construction theory and practice to indicate social constructionism as its epistemological cornerstone.

The first formal precursory statements and demonstrations of CCC appeared in a published case study (Savickas, 1988) and a book chapter (Savickas, 1989). In both publications, Savickas applied Adlerian concepts of lifestyle and life themes to career intervention. Revisions of the original 1988 book chapter in 2009 and 2019 (Savickas, 2009, 2019d) updated the central elements of CCC. The current definitive statements of CCC appear in a revised book (Savickas, 2019c) and counseling manual (Savickas, 2019a). An illustration of CCC appears in an audiovisual demonstration (Savickas & Carlson, 2009).

Predating its original published statements and subsequent advancement over more than 35 years, the roots of CCC rest firmly in three distinct eras of career intervention (Savickas, 2015). The first era encompasses the matching model for vocational guidance introduced over 140 years ago (Parsons, 1909; Richards, 1881) and elaborated on during the mid- and late 20th century (Holland, 1959, 1997). The matching model emphasizes fitting individuals based on their traits, such as interests, skills, and abilities, to occupations that require those traits. The second era comprises the developmental model for career education and career management (Super, 1990). The developmental model emphasizes career stages, tasks, and adaptability in managing a career over the lifespan. The third era involves the advent of life design (Nota & Rossier, 2015; Savickas et al., 2009) as a holistic, lifelong, contextual model focused on human diversity, individuality, and narrative identity. The life design model emphasizes self-construction, meaning making, and intentionality in career decision making and work adjustment. With life design

as its central paradigm for career intervention (Savickas, 2012), CCC and CCT also prize and incorporate matching and managing model components in attending to constructs such as manifest vocational interests and career adaptability, respectively.

Firmly grounded in social constructionism, CCC assists clients to author and enact career stories that connect self-concepts to work roles, fit work into life, and achieve self-completion and make social contributions through work. It does so by melding differential, developmental, and life design counseling approaches to consider (a) the structure composing the roles that compose a life; (b) the adaptive strategies clients use to deal with changes and navigate transitions over the lifespan; (c) the stories revealing the life theme that patterns, shapes, and defines the self-concept and its meshing with society; and (d) the settings in which the self may best interact with and adapt to the social and occupational world. Using the narrative paradigm, CCC translates these dimensions into practice by supporting clients in authoring their own life-career stories and enhancing their experience of work as a personally meaningful context for self-construction and a socially relevant endeavor.

Evolved from decades of counseling practice to address the complexities of 21st-century life, career construction today comprises a theory of vocational behavior and a system of career counseling (Savickas, 2019a, 2019b, 2019d, 2020). Unique among career theories, career construction uses practice innovations to guide theory development. That is because career construction recognizes that fluctuating client needs demand flexible counselor responses untethered to strict theoretical principles (Savickas, 2019b). CCC practice, therefore, leads career construction theory development in a reciprocal relationship of practice advances and theory building (see Collin, 2001). As Savickas (2019a) noted, “practice leads theory, not the other way around” (p. 2). Reflecting this view, career construction began as a practice approach that informed a theory to help career service providers comprehend vocational behavior and support clients in managing the complexities of work and careers in 21st-century life (Savickas, 2020). CCT (Savickas, 2020) combines the psychologies of occupations (Holland, 1997), careers (Super, 1990), and life design (Savickas et al., 2009) in a powerful conceptual synthesis. CCT views career as a self-making project to supplement 20th-century views on career as an objective person-occupation match and a subjective cycle of self in work over the lifespan. CCT thereby conceives of people, respectively, as actors resembling social scripts (RIASEC—Realistic, Investigative, Artistic, Social, Enterprising, Conventional—types) that fit corresponding work environments (Holland, 1997), agents developing readiness (career adaptability) to fit work into life (Super, 1990), and authors forming themselves in work through reflexive action (narrative construction; Savickas, 2020).

PRACTICE METHOD

CCC entails an interpersonal process of supporting people to author career stories that connect their self-concepts to work roles, fit work into life, and make meaning through work. The counseling process involves constructing, deconstructing, reconstructing, and coconstructing client narratives about self-views, preferred work settings, livable scripts, self-advice, and perspectives on current problems. This reflexive process increases the narratability of a coherent career story; adaptability resources for managing career tasks, transitions, and troubles; and intentionality in designing a meaningful life–career.

Using the narrative paradigm, CCC begins with a Career Construction Interview (CCI; Savickas, 2019a, 2019c). The CCI facilitates the first CCC phase, known as “telling the story.” Formerly known as the Career Style Interview (Savickas, 1989) and the Career Story Interview (Savickas, 2011a), the CCI prompts clients to tell their life–career stories. The CCI contains a series of questions designed to prompt clients to tell their life story in a sequence of small microstories. These microstories are then shaped into a larger macro-narrative or life portrait that constitutes the second CCC phase, “writing the career story.” From telling the life story, client and counselor coconstruct a life portrait that entails an autobiographical narrative about (a) the client’s perspective on their current career problem, (b) the self they have constructed, (c) the settings in which they prefer to enact their lives through work, (d) the script for how they will move forward in their careers, and (e) the best advice they have for themselves to encourage their forward movement. Constructing the life portrait allows relating the life theme to a career problem currently faced. Counselor and client use the life portrait to prompt the client to act on realizing the self in a life–career that comprises the third CC phase, “enacting the career story.” The three CCC processes—CCI, life portraiture, and action—promote general counseling goals of increased narratability, reflexivity, and intentionality. Thereby, the CCC process supports clients in authoring a life–career story that increases their ability to navigate career transitions and make career choices with greater clarity and conviction. The CCI follows a protocol whereby each question elicits a specific part of the overall life theme and story.

Career Construction Interview: Telling the Career Story

The CCI comprises six questions about the client’s counseling goals, self, preferred work settings, script for acting out the next chapter of their career, self-advice, and standpoint that provides perspective on the current career problem (Savickas, 2019a, 2019c). As the client relates self-defining responses to the CCI questions, the counselor listens carefully, asks follow-up questions,

and makes reflective statements to clarify meaning. Setting the scene for the current act in the client's life-career story, the CCI begins with the question "How can I be useful to you as you construct your career?" Answers to this question indicate the client's counseling goals and current problem and often hint at the solution they already have in mind for it. Often, counselors will clarify this opening question with prompts such as "When we have finished, what would you like to be different?" and "What would you like to accomplish through counseling?" The counselor uses the client's opening statement as a guidepost for all that is to follow. Thereby, the counselor remains mindful of the client's answers to the opening question and regularly refers back to it as the client relates their responses to the remaining CCI questions. At the close of counseling, the counselor asks the client, "Have we done this?" That is, the counselor checks to see if the specific goal stated by the client in their opening statement has been achieved.

To indicate the reputation of the client as lead actor in their own story, the second question asks, "Who did you admire when you were growing up? Tell me about them." As clients describe three role models, they describe themselves in terms of who they are and wish to become, their central life goal, and solutions to their presenting career problem. Savickas (2019d) initially drew from Bell's (1970) work on role models to incorporate this question into the CCI. The third question asks, "What are your favorite magazines, TV shows, or websites? What do you like about them?" Manifest interests reflected in these vicarious environments indicate potential educational and occupational settings where the client, as an agent or manager of their own career story, wants to enact their self-concept.

Linking self as actor to setting as agent, the fourth question asks, "What is your current favorite book or movie? Tell me the story." The story is chosen because it contains a plot resembling the client's principal problem, preoccupation, or pain. The script connects the client's self-concept and preferred work environments to a life plan that the client can author.

To elicit self-advice, the fifth question asks, "Tell me your favorite saying or motto." The answer indicates the best inner wisdom and guidance the client has for dealing with life's problems. Revealing the central preoccupation, the final question asks, "What are your earliest recollections? I am interested in hearing three stories about things you recall happening to you when you were 3 to 6 years old or as early as you can remember." The counselor prompts the client to tell three early childhood memories that the person recalls in the present moment because they indicate the character arc in the form of a central scheme or plot in the person's life. Early memories give the client perspective on the current career problem. Counselor and client then use the client's responses to all six CCI questions to coconstruct

a life-career portrait. For additional guidance in conducting a CCI, consult the *Career Construction Counseling Manual* (Savickas, 2019a).

Life-Career Portrait: Writing the Career Story

Using the answers to the CCI shapes a larger narrative or portrait that tells the career story with greater clarity and comprehension. Constructing a life-career portrait aims to promote understanding of the client's prevailing problem (arc), chosen solution (actor), preferred setting (agent), workable script (author), and action plan (advice). In turn, reconstructing clients' life stories aims to increase narrative identity, or who clients are as the lead characters in their life-career stories, where in the world of work they would most like to be who they are, and what they believe it will take to connect themselves to possible work settings. Reflecting on the career story leads to setting goals and taking action for the next episode of life-career.

Action: Enacting the Career Story

Having shaped the themes and patterns culled from the CCI microstories into a macronarrative about the core problem or preoccupation, motives, goals, adaptive strategies, and self-view, attention turns to action. This involves constructing a formula for success and making a realistic plan to put the story into action. This plan involves reflecting on, telling, and performing the story. Reflecting on the career story leads to setting goals for the next chapter of the life-career. Subsequently, counselors encourage clients to tell their stories to valued audiences outside of the counseling context in their most cherished social relationships. Telling and talking about the career story and the conclusions drawn from the counseling process with valued audiences makes it more real and clear, fostering a greater sense of confidence in living it. Valued audiences typically include family members, friends, mentors, coaches, and teachers. Performing the story by identifying specific actions to take increases exploration, commitment, and goal attainment. Exhibit 1.1 summarizes the key elements of CCC.

My Career Story

The self-directed *My Career Story* (MCS) workbook (Savickas & Hartung, 2021) offers material for supplementary use in CCC and can be used in group and classroom settings. The MCS aims to augment and simulate essential elements of CCC. Workbooks like the MCS offer an effective means of career intervention because they contain written exercises and goal-setting activities

EXHIBIT 1.1. A Career Construction Counseling Brief

Career Construction Counseling:

- The interpersonal process of supporting people in designing a work life.
- Supports clients in attaining a clearer sense of self, identity, and mission by narrating their life-career stories.

Three parts:

Interview: career construction interview (CCI)

Portraiture: life-career portrait construction

Action: use portrait for goal setting, performance planning

CCI: six questions elicit microstories about client's

- goals for counseling, current problem, and a solution they already have in mind.
- self-concept or reputation as the lead actor in their own career story (role models).
- preferred setting for enacting their self-concept (interests).
- script for connecting self-concept and interests in a career plan (favorite story).
- self-advice for moving ahead (motto).
- perspective on their current career problem (early memories).

Life-career portrait: CCI stories are used to coconstruct a larger narrative about client's

- perspective on the career problem (arc)
- chosen solution (actor)
- preferred stage (agent)
- workable script (author)
- action plan (advice)

Action: client uses the life portrait to make a realistic action plan that includes

- telling the story to valued audiences such as family members, friends, mentors, coaches, and teachers.
 - performing the story by identifying specific actions to increase exploration, commitment, and goal attainment.
-

identified as critical to successful career planning, exploration, and choice (S. D. Brown et al., 2003). Available at no cost in downloadable and printable form at <https://www.marksavickas.com/>, the MCS contains three parts. Part I, Telling My Story, involves answering Questions 2 through 5 from the CCI. These questions elicit small stories about self, setting, script, and self-advice. Part II, Understanding My Story, uses the answers from Part I to increase narrative identity or who individuals are as the lead characters in their own life-career stories, where in the world of work they would most like to be

who they are, and what they believe it will take to connect themselves to possible work settings. Part III, Enacting My Story, involves constructing a realistic plan to put the story into action.

Counselors, teachers, career advisors, and career coaches in individual, group, and classroom settings can use the *MCS* for guided self-reflection to increase narrative identity and intentionality in career planning, career choice, and work adjustment. Career service providers may assign the workbook to students and clients in counseling and educational settings and discuss the results with them. In groups, the *MCS* can be used to engage members as an audience to help individuals tell, understand, and enact their career stories. Teachers may use the workbook as the syllabus for a high school or college career orientation or career education course. The *MCS* has been translated into Chinese, French, German, Italian, Portuguese, and Spanish. All these versions are available for use at no cost at <https://www.marksavickas.com/assessments/>.

RESEARCH SUPPORT

Career construction practice methods, along with career construction theory, have been adopted and applied worldwide, garnering a growing base of research support for their use (e.g., Cardoso et al., 2014a, 2020; Rudolph et al., 2019; Savickas, 2020, 2021). Several published case studies support CCC as an effective career intervention in the United States (e.g., Barclay & Stoltz, 2016; Savickas, 2009), South Africa (Maree, 2015), Italy (Hartung & Santilli, 2017), and other countries. Hypothesis testing studies have also shown the effectiveness of CCC in individual (Cardoso et al., 2023; F Silva et al., 2022) and group intervention (Cardoso et al., 2017; Santilli & Hartung, 2022; Santilli et al., 2019). The effectiveness of CCC underscores the usefulness of narrative interventions in helping people create meaningful occupational futures. Meanwhile, qualitative studies indicate usefulness of the CCC for promoting client career awareness, self-confidence, sense of direction, and confirmation of their career path (Reh fuss, del Corso, et al., 2011), as well as identifying life themes and making meaningful career decisions (Reh fuss, Cosio, & del Corso, 2011). Dalene (2022) provided evidence that counselors' experiences conducting CCC indicate that the process enhances client meaning making with regard to career decision making and increasing access to decent work. A process analysis supported prior research indicating the usefulness of CCC for promoting self-reflective action (Hartung & Vess, 2016). Qualitative inquiry also supports the use of early recollections for fostering meaning, wholeness, and cohesion in clients' lives (Dalene, 2023).

CCC is further supported by several studies published in a special issue of the *Journal of Vocational Behavior* (Savickas, 2016). Research also supports the use of the MCS for fostering reflexivity and enhanced career decision making and planning (Cadaret & Hartung, 2021; Hartung & Santilli, 2018; Santilli et al., 2019; Santilli & Hartung, 2022).

CONCLUSION

Career construction counseling supports clients in facilitating change to navigate career transitions, tasks, and troubles. Emerging from its roots in psychodynamic, differential, developmental, and narrative psychology, CCC provides a narrative-based career intervention system. As such, CCC engages clients in self-construction, showing them how to use work to actively master what they passively suffer, turn wounds and problems into blessings, and turn discouragement and despair into hope. CCC offers clients a safe space for increasing their ability to understand, tell, and use their own life-career story and inner voice with conviction. By doing this, they can move forward in preparing for, choosing, entering, adjusting to, and managing work roles. And in so doing, they bring greater meaning and satisfaction to their careers and lives.