

Article

# Integrating Personal and Career Counseling to Promote Sustainable Development and Change

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**Abstract:** This article reports on the integration of personal and career counseling to promote sustainable development and change. An explorative, descriptive, instrumental, single-case study approach was followed. Qualitative and quantitative data collection strategies were used to collect data, and an integrative career construction counseling intervention was conducted. The intervention comprised, first, elicitation of the participant's micro- and meso-career-life stories; second, integration of these stories into a coherent macro-story, with the participant's authorization of the narrative; and, third, co-construction by the participant and the counselor of action steps to facilitate action and forward movement. Integrating personal and career counseling helped to address the participants' deep-seated personal needs while simultaneously addressing his career counseling needs. Longitudinal, qualitative, quantitative, and mixed-methods research is essential to determine the value and importance of integrating personal and career counseling. This study contributed to expanding the research on interventions that integrate personal and career counseling, promoting the development of sustainable career-life projects.

**Keywords:** personal counseling; career counseling; case study; career construction counseling; sustainable development and change

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## 1. Introduction

The ultimate aims of career counseling are to help people choose appropriate fields of study and careers, make meaning of their career-lives, find a sense of purpose in and design successful lives, and make meaningful social contributions [1–4]. To achieve these aims, it is essential to help people deal with hurt and trauma experienced in the past, rise above contextual challenges, and access much-needed resources. Duffy and Dik [5] contend that “once clients have addressed the broad level of life purpose or meaning, a next step is for counselors to help clients connect what they view as their life purpose or role in the larger society with their activity within the work role”. This is in line with Fouad and Jackson's [6] view that the provision of career-related services in ‘silos’ can create the erroneous impression of a separation between psychological health-related issues and wellbeing-related issues, that is, the mistaken belief that career and personal counseling are inherently different. Fouad and Jackson [6] argue that “particularly in light of the current economic recession and broad cutbacks in human services generally, integrative career services could be provided to facilitate preventative health and educational goals more effectively and for lower costs long-term.” This view is supported by Krumboltz [7], Savickas [8], Blustein [9], and Maree [10] who believe that the close relationship between personal and career and counseling calls for an integrative approach to the training of all (career) counselors. While we (the authors of this article) agree with the general sentiments expressed by Krumboltz, we disagree that there is a need to distinguish between ‘personal’ and ‘career’ counseling

in the first place. Here, we agree with Savickas [8,11] and others who maintain that career counseling is, by definition, personal counseling.

From a psychological perspective, sustainability and sustainable development [12,13] relate to promoting strengths that will improve people's chances to enjoy decent and meaningful lives [2,14,15]. This perspective can be linked to a primary prevention perspective [16], which stresses the importance of constructing a healthy life (both personally and professionally) through timely counseling interventions. From an ecological and socioeconomic as well as individual perspective, the psychology of sustainability and sustainable development [12,13] aims to improve people's quality of life generally. Advanced counseling interventions can promote reflection and reflexivity on what constitutes actual sustainability for people. Actual sustainability here refers to people's core goals, interests, and values. Ultimately, the goal is to promote sustainable career-life projects and inspire successful actions and positive change [17].

This paper is articulated as follows. Theories about personal counseling, life design counseling principles, integrated use of two instruments to promote career counseling are delineated; rationale for the study and goals of the study are provided; method, outcomes of the quantitative part of the assessment, outcomes of the qualitative part of the assessment, discussion, advice for counselors contemplating this type of intervention, limitations, recommendations for future research, and conclusion are presented.

### *1.1. Personal Counseling*

The view that career counseling actually comprises personal counseling and that attempting to draw a distinction between 'career' counseling and 'personal' counseling is inadvisable is not new. As long ago as 1993, Savickas [8] said that "career is personal" (p. 212), an opinion that also confirms the global movement towards adopting and integrative (qualitative-quantitative) approach to career counseling, that is, an approach that apportions equal value to 'subjective' (qualitative) and 'objective' (quantitative) approaches. Betz and Corning [18], too, contend that "'career' and 'personal' counseling should not be viewed as different types of counseling because: (a) the holistic philosophy of counseling emphasizes helping 'whole' persons whose lives contain many important and meaningful roles; (b) recent research on the implications of gender and race for career development further demonstrates the inseparability of our career and 'personal' lives; and (c) there are numerous commonalities in the 'career' and 'personal' counseling process" (p. 137). These views laid the foundation for the global movement towards adopting qualitative approaches in addition to quantitative approaches in career counseling and promoted the belief in the value of drawing on 'subjective' aspects ('stories') in addition to 'objective' aspects ('scores') [19]. Patton and McMahon [19] add that debates on the synthesis of personal and career counseling intensified following the establishment of tighter linkages between personal counseling and career counseling and also following better understanding of career and career development. They maintain that "it is too simplistic to adopt the approach that individuals can separate career issues from personal issues" (p. 56). Many other authors since then have also said that the distinction between personal and career counseling is artificial at best. Patterson-Mills [20], for instance, supports Krumboltz's [7] view that "[t]here is no division between personal and career counseling . . . Personal and career counseling are one and the same" (p. 24).

This article supports the view that career counseling indeed has a strong personal component. Savickas [11,20,21] states in various publications that the idea that career counseling and 'personal' counseling are different lost traction when the distinction and separation between work and other life roles disappeared. More than ever before, in the current rapidly changing world of work, people regard their careers as very personal. It is now generally agreed that the use of 'objective' methods ('scores') in relative isolation more often than not disregards the subjective and personal meanings that people attach to their careers.

This article will focus on life design counseling in order to highlight the personal nature of career counseling.

### 1.2. Life Design Counseling Principles

Life design [22] counseling builds on self- and career construction theory, a theory based largely on Guichard's [23] self-construction theory and Savickas' career construction theory (CCT) [24]. Savickas [22] categorizes life design as the third major paradigm in career counseling in addition to and following on the vocational guidance and career guidance or education paradigms. He draws a distinction between "the career construction theory of vocational behavior . . . in applied psychology" and life design as a career counseling discourse. The three paradigms are associated with scores, stages, and stories respectively and represent the spirit of life design counseling. Used together, people's scores on interest inventories, the stages at which they prefer to enact their self-concept, and their life stories help apply career construction theory itself to the life design counseling dialogue. Life design counseling (as a more comprehensive intervention than career construction counseling) places increased emphasis on the 'personal' side of career counseling and underscores the importance and value of the counseling relationship between counselor and client.

The emergence of the life design paradigm (against the background of the global acceptance of an integrative (qualitative–quantitative) approach [14,17] to career counseling intervention) emphasizes the importance of personal meaning and the working alliance [2,9,25] between career counselor and client in the career counseling relationship. At the same time, it is essential to acknowledge the importance of promoting relationships within and beyond the workplace in order to shape work-related decisions, experiences, and interactions (relational theory of working; [25]). Theory, practice, and intervention in counseling therefore need to be responsive to the challenges and changes in the 21st century [12,26–28] in order to support people in their construction of sustainable career and life projects [15,28].

These developments have effectively bridged the artificial 'gap' between (career) counseling and personal counseling. Below, we discuss the value of the integrated use of two newly developed instruments to promote career counseling as personal counseling.

### 1.3. Integrated Use of Two Instruments to Promote Career Counseling

The *Career Interest Profile (CIP)* (Version 6) [29] can be used in conjunction with the *Maree Career Matrix (MCM)* [10,30,31] to help career counselors first understand the distinctive experiences of clients in career contexts and then help them construct, deconstruct, reconstruct, and co-construct their lives and ultimately redesign and reconstruct (rewrite) their career and life stories. Career counselors can use these two instruments together to help clients facing a crossroads in their lives recapture self-respect, gain an improved sense of self, and rediscover hope by identifying and enacting major life themes in their lives to 'hold' them during times of transitions, to convert pain into hope, to turn weaknesses into strengths, and to convert failure into success and suffering into healing. This approach enables career counselors to enhance clients' reflections (and meta-reflections) on their career-life stories. Construction, deconstruction, reconstruction, and co-construction of these stories, along the guidelines suggested by Savickas [11], can thus take place. Use of these instruments demonstrates the folly of attempting to distinguish between these two forms of intervention. The process they promote is reflexivity [27,32,33].

### 1.4. Rationale for the Study

Many authors have thus argued that it makes no sense to distinguish between 'personal' and 'career' counseling and that it would be better to use the term 'career counseling' for both types of counseling. However, while numerous studies have been done on career counseling in general, few articles have appeared on the 'personal' nature of such counseling. This article hopes to contribute to the debate on the topic. The project was undertaken to help show how career counseling can be administered practically to promote personal counseling during career counseling interventions. Thus,

in particular, this study aims to contribute to expand the research on interventions that integrate personal and career counseling promoting the development of sustainable career-life projects.

### 1.5. Goals of the Study

The study involved providing integrative career counseling (using two recently developed questionnaires; one qualitative and one quantitative) to a late adolescent who had sought career counseling to help him deal also with 'personal' issues. The following two questions guided the research.

- a. Is there a difference between 'personal' and 'career' counseling?
- b. What was the influence of integrative career counseling (as discussed in this article) on a late adolescent who presented with major insecurities?

## 2. Method

### 2.1. Participant and Context

Jacques (a pseudonym; the youngest of three children), a late adolescent, was selected conveniently from a number of adolescents who had sought career counseling in April 2018. In this article, we discuss the particular career-life counseling related needs of a late adolescent who had difficulty navigating the transition from school to university. As an 18-year-old English-speaking student, Jacques had achieved average marks in his final Grade 12 examinations in 2012 and decided to take a gap year to help him clarify his plans for the future and "deal with my feelings of insecurity and uncertainty". Jacques was described by friends and parents as a "very quiet, withdrawn person that doesn't open up easily" to others. Jacques described himself as "very unsure of myself; very quiet; very uncertain and insecure". Asked what he was hoping to gain from career counseling, Jacques replied: "I am inclined to over-think matters and always assume that the worst will happen. Help me choose a career that will inspire me to be more positive and sure of myself. I am currently taking a gap year, but so far nothing has happened that has made me feel more secure." I explained the essence of the integrative approach to Jacques who agreed to an assessment that would include the use of both qualitative and quantitative techniques.

### 2.2. The Counselors

At the time of the intervention, the counselors were lecturers, researchers, and psychologists each with 30+ years of experience in career counseling.

### 2.3. Procedure

The intervention was conducted in three sessions. The intervention on Day 1 took about four hours (08:00 a.m. to roughly 12:00 p.m.), including a few breaks. A simultaneous approach (quantitative and qualitative assessment) was followed. In the 'elicitation' phase (Phase 1; 30 min), the initial interview was conducted with Jacques who then began completing the *MCM* and the *CIP*. After this, his "My life story" as well as the reports written by his parents and friends were discussed with him. The session ended with the recalling of his three earliest memories.

In Phase 2 (90 min), one week later, Jacques' elicited 'career-life story' was read back to him. Meta-reflection on his part was facilitated by asking him to reflect repeatedly on his own reflections as contained in his responses to the *CIP* questions. General career choice-related, psychosocial, and psycho-educational information was obtained while making sure that he was not given 'advice'. Instead, Jacques was helped to interpret the key career-life themes yielded by the qualitative outcomes (his career-life 'stories') (qualitative assessment). Considering these themes and integrating them with the interest-related outcomes derived from the 'scores' (quantitative assessment), Jacques was able to advise himself on a possible career choice. Most significantly, he was guided on how to make

meaning of and find a sense of purpose in his future career-life. In Phase 3 (60 min), two weeks later, we discussed possible fields of study and action plans to help Jacques move forward by gaining clarity on his provisionally chosen study fields.

In line with Cardoso's [34] view that clients should be informed about the goals and nature of career counseling to strengthen the working alliance between counselor and client, Jacques' implicit and explicit requests for 'advice' were consistently answered by simply referring him to the first question in the CIP ("Who is the expert on you; knows you better than anyone else in the world?") and by encouraging him to reflect on his initial reflections. An external coder coded the data to ensure that the identified themes were in accordance with the elicited data to enhance the trustworthiness of the deductive process.

#### 2.4. Mode of Inquiry

An explorative, descriptive, instrumental, single-case study approach was followed. The participant was studied in a natural (real-life) context (thus a naturalistic study) [35].

#### 2.5. Data-Gathering Instruments

**Quantitative assessment**—The *Maree Career Matrix (MCM)* [10,30,31]. This questionnaire was developed and standardized in South Africa between 2002 and 2015. Measuring interests and self-estimates of confidence to follow certain careers, it comprises a list of 152 occupations divided into 19 categories (eight careers per category). The psychometric properties of the MCM are considered excellent [29,30]. Rasch analysis confirmed that the MCM interest items measured a single construct. In addition, all the categories had good reliability coefficients (>0.70) while test-retest reliability exceeded 0.70 for all the categories. MCM scores furnish career counselors and clients with a starting point to help them clarify and examine career profiles in depth. Ferreira and Morgan [36] recently confirmed their support for the structural validity and reliability of the MCM when used to determine the career interests and confidence of adults).

**Qualitative assessment**—The *Career Interest Profile (CIP)* (Version 6) [29,37] reflects Savickas' [38] as well as other scholars such as Adler [39] and Jung's [40] views on qualitative career counseling. Designed to obtain clients' key career-life themes and promote reflection, reflexivity, and self-reflexivity [41] on values and preferred interests, it can be used to facilitate self-advising by clients in conjunction with career counselors. The CIP has four parts (see Table 1) designed to help clients identify their career-life themes, determine their career interests and concerns, and elicit advice from within on how to turn challenges ("problems") into themes of hope they can use to advance their individual career-life projects. The instrument enables career counselors to listen for rather than to clients' career-life stories and story lines [32,42]. Jacques was requested also to write and bring along an autobiographical narrative entitled "My life story" and to obtain a biographical narrative written by a person who, in his opinion, knew him best and whom he trusted.

**Table 1.** Description of the CIP [28].

Part	Information Elicited	Associated Career Counseling Service	Career Counseling Paradigm [11,21,22]
1	Biographical details, family influences, and work-related information	Educate, coach	Developmental
2	5 most and least preferred career preferences	Guide, advise	Vocational guidance
3	4 career choice questions plus subquestions	Guide, advise, design, heal	Vocational guidance/Life designing
4	14 career-life story narrative questions plus subquestions	Guide, advise, design, heal	Developmental/Life designing

## 2.6. Rigor of the Study

First, sufficient information was obtained to facilitate replication of the study in different settings. Second, Jacques was asked repeatedly to reflect on the intervention (conducted in English, his mother tongue), and all his comments were carefully noted and clarified with him. Third, the simultaneous use of qualitative and quantitative techniques enhanced triangulation. Lastly, asking different qualitative questions promoted crystallization [43].

## 2.7. Data Analysis

Qualitative data—The qualitative data obtained from the administration of Parts 1, 3, and 4 of the *CIP* were analyzed by following the steps listed below [11,44]:

- a. Recording words and phrases that could reveal Jacques' key life themes.
- b. Repeatedly asking Jacques to meta-reflect (reflect on his reflections).
- c. Documenting repeated words and phrases.
- d. Reading Jacques' words back to him and urging him to listen carefully to himself. In many instances, he was asked to repeat words out loud.

Jacques' responses to the three earliest recollections question were used in combination with his responses to other questions in the *CIP* as the foundation for uncovering his key career-life themes. These themes were, in turn, used to help him decide on study fields for purposes of work analysis and on strategies to enhance his career development, including his career adaptability (co-construction).

Quantitative data—The quantitative results were studied carefully to help Jacques and me identify common interest patterns. We then reflected on these patterns to see if they aligned with his career aspirations and the related responses from his interest profile (triangulation).

## 2.8. Ethical Issues

Jacques gave written informed consent for the analysis of the data and the reporting of the findings. The University of Pretoria's Institutional Review Board approved the study. The research was conducted in Pretoria.

## 3. Outcomes

### 3.1. Outcomes of the Quantitative Part of the Assessment

According to the *MCM* and Part 2 of the *CIP*, Jacques' highest preferred interest categories were (a) Sport; (b) Adventure, plants, animals and the environment; (c) Social, community and community services; (d) Tourism, the hospitality and the tourist transport industry; (e) Legal practice and security services; and (f) Information communication technology. The first four categories fell in the *MCM*'s "Go for it!" quadrant, indicating definite, clearly defined interests and confidence levels. The last two fell in the category "Upskill yourself", indicating high interest in certain fields and corresponding low(er) confidence levels. Jacques was urged to find out why he believed he did not have the competencies needed to succeed in these career categories (which he definitely preferred).

### 3.2. Outcomes of the Qualitative Part of the Assessment

Jacques' responses to questions in Part 4 of the *CIP* appear below (due to space constraints, only selected responses are discussed).

"What are your greatest strengths?" (Jacques' answers are reported verbatim with only very light editing to preserve the authenticity of the responses).

"I am good at sport, mentally strong, hard-working, open-minded, able to work alone, a good communicator (when I am compelled to be), function well under pressure in sport but not interpersonally and academically."

“What are your areas for growth?” (Jacques was reminded that his (perceived) areas for development or growth (formerly referred to as ‘weaknesses’) could and should be converted into strengths).

“I can be a better listener, I should read more and stop over-thinking things; I do not wear my emotions on my sleeve, I should plan my program better and learn to share my deepest emotions, and I should stay committed, even when I become despondent.”

“How do other people (for instance, teachers and friends) see you?”

“I am quiet, reserved, often get overlooked for the recognition I deserve because of this. I struggle with the pressures of writing tests and examinations. Often wary to start/do things because of my fear of failure. Afraid to disappoint or fail others. I have a natural talent for physical activity/sport but I has not yet committed to anything.”

“Whom did you admire or who were your role models when you were young and why?” (Jacques’ sense of who he is or wants to be or become).

“Kevin Peterson: Able to take his dream in a sport career to another country, making himself a sport legend.”

“A friend, John. He had to move from an Afrikaans primary school to an English secondary school. I admire how hard he worked to develop socially and academically and managed to adapt. He made challenges seem easier than they actually were.”

“A family friend, Peter (a Minister of religion). He was insolent, messed around; wasted his time at university but eventually decided to work hard to succeed. He studied for nine years, doing many things over and over again until he eventually succeeded. He was eventually appointed to a top management position. Yet, he stayed the same and never let anything get him down.”

(Jacques’ role models confirm his goals in life and provide him with guidelines on how to achieve those goals).

“What are your favorite quotations?” (Jacques’ advice to himself).

“It is not about the number of times you fall down; it is about the number of times you get up.” (Always keep heart and get up after you have failed).

“I am not a man of words; I am a man of action.” (It is better to do than to only talk about something.)

“Do not reach for the sky; there are already footprints on the moon. Dream big and work hard.” (Aim high and be ambitious but always remain firmly grounded and remember that promises alone mean little).

“How do you want people to quote you?”

“A man’s actions should speak louder than his words.” (What you do is more valuable than what you say you will do).

The following are some of the most hurtful experiences in Jacques’ youth that he does not want others to suffer or go through (his ‘deepest secrets’; what he had to suffer passively in early life and needs to undo actively now).

“Comparing myself to others always made me feel inferior and incompetent.”

(A quiet, soft-spoken, shy introvert person, Jacques was often ignored and rejected by others).

“Accepting that I am not academically as strong as my brother.”

(Jacques always lived in the shadow of his very clever brother).

“Hard work does not always pay off.”

(Jacques felt that no matter how hard he worked, it would be impossible to emulate his brother who had qualified for sought-after fields of study while Jacques would struggle to get into university. Believing and feeling that he was not living up to the expectations of his father in particular heightened his feelings of inadequacy. Recurring themes included Jacques’ insecurity, sadness, loneliness, isolation, lack of commitment, feelings of rejection).

Jacques’ earliest recollections (pointing to his central life themes or preoccupations but also his advice to himself on how to deal with these preoccupations) appear below. These recollections were analyzed according to the prescriptions of Adler [39], Hartung [45,46], Maree [44], Savickas [11], and Watkins [47].

### 3.2.1. Acting Unwisely Produces Pain

“This story happened when I was four years old. My brother and I were playing cricket on the lawn. I remember admiring him; appreciating how well he was hitting the ball. I suddenly felt something sitting on my eyelid. Not knowing what it was, I asked my brother to come have a look. He took a look, laughed, and said it was a bee. I did not listen and decided to swat the bee, which then stung me. Very soon there was a great deal of swelling and pain.”

### 3.2.2. Hurt Triggered by Indolence

“I was five years old when this happened on a tennis court in town. At the time, I was practising tennis with a coach. At one stage, we again stopped playing so I could start picking up the large number of balls that were lying on my side of the court. Then, I saw a ball on the other side of net and decided to climb over the net to fetch that ball instead of walking around the net pole. As I was clumsily climbing over, my foot got stuck and I broke my arm. I felt terribly embarrassed.” (SIGHS) “My tendency to cut corners has always caused me problems.”

(Jacques spontaneously reflected on his reflections—meta-reflection thus occurred).

### 3.2.3. Thoughtless Behavior Ends in Embarrassment

“One day, when I was six years old, we went to my granddad’s house. My brother and I started playing rugby with our uncle, but he soon left and the game got a little too intense and we became over-excited. I decided to kick the ball but ended up breaking the kitchen window by kicking the ball into the window. I felt so embarrassed and anxious; unsure about what the reaction of the adults would be and what they would do to me.”

I then asked Jacques to suggest an inclusive heading for all three of the earliest recollections. After staring into the distance for a while, he replied: “Inattention, laziness, and pointless competition bring pain, embarrassment, and insecurity.” This heading encapsulates Jacques’ approach to life.

By analyzing Jacques’ earliest recollections, we could uncover his key career-life themes. The first ‘story’ reveals his inability to act ‘wisely’. He explained that he generally knew what he needed to do to improve but that often he could not get himself so far as to actually do what needed to be done. This sets the tone for his career-life story. He realizes that his lack of effort has always been a major factor in his under-achievement. A key life theme.

The first verb Jacques uses is 'playing' cricket, which indicates his interest in participating in sport. This theme runs through all three stories, confirming his liking to take part in sport. This suggests that Jacques could find fulfilment in a sport-related career. From a different perspective, the action that is reported ('playing') suggests it has perhaps not occurred to him that 'playing' alone will not lead to success in an academic environment. Acting unwisely or thoughtlessly and being lazy, too, have caused him a great deal of unnecessary hurt and anxiety and have increased his feelings of insecurity and not fitting in. The three earliest recollections are in line with the themes uncovered by his responses to questions in the *CIP*.

Lastly, I asked Jacques how he had experienced the intervention.

- a. "What did you enjoy?"  
"The verbal questions. I am not a great talker, though." (Reflexivity).
- b. "What did you not enjoy?"  
"The figures that had to be rotated!" (SMILES) "I am not interested in practical things."
- c. "Is there anything else that I need to know about you?"  
"I am an insecure person; very quiet and very unsure of myself. I am inclined to become 'depressed'; feeling that life is not worthwhile."

In addition to clarifying his interests and other personality traits, Jacques' responses to the *MCM* and *CIP* questions, together with his meta-reflections on his reflections (his answers to questions), reveal his central life themes, elucidate how he makes meaning of his life, and reveal his sense of purpose [21,22]. After having elicited Jacques' career-life story and reading it back to him (construction) during the second, we together used the integrated information (co-construction) to decide on a number of fields of study that he could do his job analysis on during the third session. The emphasis was on identifying a number of fields that could help him make meaning of and obtain a sense of purpose in his career-life instead of simply finding out what he could do to start his career journey and make money. Together, we created a provisional table containing the 'career-life stories' and themes (qualitative data) alongside the 'results' ('scores'). By reflecting repeatedly on the accords between the two sets of information ('scores' and 'career stories'), Jacques could triangulate the two sets and uncover the value of drawing on his 'career-life stories' as well as his 'scores'. Table 2 shows the strong, positive association between the two sets of data.

Jacques could also consider enrolling on short courses in one or more of the following fields to help him make meaning of his life.

- ✓ Sport
- ✓ Other adventure-related activities
- ✓ Listening to his favorite music (even while practising)

Jacques was discreetly told that watching movies and playing video games for hours could possibly increase his feelings of 'worthlessness'.

I ended the session by asking Jacques to draft a statement to help him 'make meaning' of his career-life (understand why he had chosen the particular possible fields of study) and clarify his purpose in life (Why am I alive? What is the meaning of my life?). He found it relatively easy to come up with the following response: "Next year, I will study. Whatever field of study I decide on must put me in a position where I can help others that have nobody else than me to help them (social meaning). In the process (personal meaning), it must allow me to meet my need to help people who are unsure of themselves; people who are struggling to use the opportunities they get in life. Moreover, I want a job that will give me sufficient opportunity to take part in sport, work with smaller groups of people, and overcome my insecurity."

**Table 2.** Integrated career-life themes and related study fields.

Identified Career-Life Themes	Associated Study Fields	Data Sources	
		Qualitative	Quantitative
A. Interest patterns			
1. Sport			
2. Adventure, plants, animals, and the environment	BSportSci (specialising in biokinetics) BA Health Sciences (Human Movement Sciences/Recreational Studies, specialising in children kinetics)	<i>CIP</i> "My life story"/ reflections/meta-reflections	<i>MCM</i>
3. Social, community, and community services			
4. Tourism, hospitality, and the tourist transport industry	BEd (Human Movement Sciences) BCom (Law)	Earliest recollections	
5. Legal practice and security services	BCom (Industrial Psychology/Labor Relations Management)		
6. Information communication technology	BCom (Tourism Management and Recreational Studies)		
B. Deep sense of insecurity			
1. Loneliness (mostly alone; just sitting around idly listening to music by himself)	BCom (Sport Management) BCom (Sport Coaching) BCom (Informatics)		
2. Mostly plays video games by himself			
3. Keeps to himself			
C. Sadness			
1. Irritability		<i>CIP</i> "My life story"/(retrospective) reflections	
2. Thinks negatively (always expects worst will happen)		Friends' comments/Mother's report	
D. Lack of motivation			
1. Lacking commitment		<i>CIP</i> , "My life story"/(retrospective) reflections	
2. Lacking motivation		Friends' comments/Mother's report	
E. Brightness			
1. Academic excellence		Friends' comments/Mother's report	
2. 'Unreadable'; deep thinker			

At the conclusion of the third session, I asked Jacques how he had experienced the intervention. He responded that he had discovered a lot about himself. He was pleased to have found fields of study that would help him avoid ending up in a career that would make him feel even more insecure or that he would not enjoy. He agreed to carry out a thorough job analysis of the fields of study we had agreed upon. He was asked to provide feedback at regular intervals and was told he would be welcome to set up an appointment with me if and whenever he needed to do so.

### 3.3. Follow-Up

Four months later, Jacques informed me that he had decided to study biokinetics. He shared the following 'story' with me, adding that what had happened in the story had helped him make up his mind regarding his field of study.

"I am more at peace with myself now; I have grown a lot during and after the assessment." Asked what he meant by "more at peace", he replied: "One day, driving home after a trip to the grocery store, a young man was bumped off his bicycle by a reckless motorist. I immediately stopped, helped him up, and took him to hospital. There, for the first time, I experienced first-hand how it feels to be able to help people that have no one to help them. I now know that that is what I want to do more than anything else: help people with sports injuries in a way that nobody else can or will be willing to. This experience fills me with hope for the future."

Since his marks were not good enough for him to study at a local university, he applied to a smaller university some 200 km away from where he lived. Another four months later, he proudly announced that he had been accepted to enroll on a three-year course in biokinetics.

## 4. Discussion

The research discussed in this article involved the provision of integrative career counseling (using two recently developed questionnaires, one qualitative and one quantitative) to a late adolescent who had sought career counseling that would help him deal also with 'personal' issues. The following two questions guided the research.

- a. Is there a difference between 'personal' and 'career' counseling?
- b. What was the influence of integrative career counseling (as discussed in this article) on a late adolescent who presented with major insecurities?

This research study was in part a response to global calls for innovation in career counseling [48,49]. The intervention aimed to elicit, interpret, and integrate the research participant's 'subjective' career-life stories and 'objective' scores [21] in a way that combined personal counseling with career counseling. This aim was achieved in large measure. First, in accordance with the first of the theoretical traditions associated with career construction theory (CCT) (the differential approach; vocational guidance), the 'quantitative' MCM outcomes in combination with the 'quantitative' information obtained from Part 2 of the CIP yielded valuable information about different fields of study and careers as well as a number of preferred interest categories for the research participant. Second, certain questions in the CIP (e.g., about the participant's strengths and areas for development) provided valuable qualitative information relating to the second of the theoretical traditions associated with career construction theory (CCT), namely the developmental approach or career education. Lastly, questions on the three things that 'hurt' the participant the most and his three earliest recollections yielded valuable information relating to the third theoretical orientation of the CCT, namely the psychodynamic approach (the storied or narrative approach).

The qualitative part of the assessment uncovered key life themes; for instance, the participant's laziness as well as his inability or reluctance to take some obvious steps to bring about change and forward movement. Careful perusal of his 'autobiography' (life story) revealed that feelings of

consistent rejection by meaningful others, his feelings of inferiority regarding his brother and his friends, and his lack of self-confidence ‘conspired’ to aggravate his sense of uncertainty and insecurity. Jacques (the research participant) lacked the self-confidence needed to transition successfully from high school to university, and he therefore decided to spend an additional year to clarify his future. At the time of the initial assessment, however, he felt even more unsure about his future, stating that nothing had changed and that he was “no closer to deciding on [his] future than a year ago”. He felt that there had been no action or forward movement since leaving school. While the intervention described here focused ostensibly on his choice of a career and associated fields of study, Jacques’ response to the very first question in the *CIP* (“How can I be of use, help, or value to you?”) revealed that his impaired sense of self, insecurity, uncertainty, and inability to start moving and do things were the main reasons for his lack of progress.

The intervention described here integrated ‘personal’ and ‘career choice’ factors. Jacques was ‘stuck’ in a frustrating situation, and merely providing additional information about possible fields of study was unlikely to help him change and move forward. Likewise, providing psycho-educational and psychosocial information, while valuable and necessary, would not suffice to resolve his core challenge, which was to begin moving forward instead of remaining stuck at a major point of transition. What was needed was career counseling aimed at promoting his ‘healing’, which necessitated uncovering numerous ‘personal’ stories and weaving them together into a ‘healing’ story “that provides both meaning and direction” [50] to facilitate forward movement.

The style of counseling for understanding and addressing the ‘personal’ and career counseling needs of someone presenting with profound insecurities as described here accords with the fundamental career counseling tenet that the only real expert on any human being is that person herself or himself, and that advice to her or him should come from within [51,52]. Jacques’ earliest recollections confirmed his interest in sport-related activities and his inclination to be active, thus corroborating his interest in sport as revealed by the majority of his responses to the ‘quantitative’ part of the assessment (‘differential’ orientation). Moreover, his earliest recollections revealed why he felt ‘stuck’: he was once again facing a crossroads, and acting unwisely or thoughtlessly and being lazy now and in the future would inevitably cause him a great deal of unnecessary hurt and anxiety and aggravate his sense of insecurity. By providing career counseling in the way described here, Jacques was empowered to find advice from within on how to deal with his feelings of insecurity and not fitting in. Change and forward movement occurred only when he started to accept responsibility for finding a ‘solution’ and when he began to note and work actively towards the aims and goals suggested by his role models and his favourite quotations [53].

The research described here also supports Super’s [54] view that the interests of people who present for personal and career counseling are best served when the counseling involves “psychological insights combined with an understanding of the interaction between individuals and their life-situations, knowledge of ‘the real world’ the ability to talk, act, and they lead to seeing how to act and even to action” (p. 134). The intervention provided insight into Jacques’ idiosyncratic situation, helped him understand the interaction between himself and his life-situation [55], facilitated his examination of the world of work, and enhanced his ability to articulate his autobiography [56], obtain clarity on the ‘therapeutic’ actions (needed retrospective reflection, Savickas [21]), and, ultimately, take action and move forward (reflexivity). Moreover, the intervention integrated the two forms of counseling cited by Super [54], namely situational and personal. Jacques was first helped to gain insight into his developmental challenges, that is, understand that his situation had changed and that his current behavior was not consistent with the typical behavior expected at his specific developmental level. Second, his adaptational challenges—which manifested in his unwillingness/inability to accept that it was his responsibility to take the action steps needed to help him adapt to changing demands—were addressed.

The two newly developed career counseling instruments used in the current research to facilitate the working alliance between the participant and the counselor [34] elicited the participant’s career-life

story [55,56] and yielded complementary data that were later integrated to help the participant not only choose a career but, especially, deal with his deep sense of insecurity. Change was promoted through the implementation of self- and career construction [56] as well as reflexivity processes and outcomes [27]. This included elicitation of the participant's central life themes (such as his tendency to neglect his studies, his laziness, and his failure to heed danger signs) and his subsequently drawing on these themes/stories for advice on how to negotiate his 'stuckness' and inability to move forward. The research also supported Arnett's [57] and Maree's [58] finding that a variety of internal and external factors can induce lingering insecurity in adolescents and need to be dealt with effectively to promote understanding and change.

In summary: The approach espoused in this article demonstrates how career construction theory was used by counselors to intervene practically in the case of a late adolescent who sought career counseling while presenting with deep feelings of insecurity. This was done through the construction, deconstruction, reconstruction, and co-construction of the participant's career-life story. This style of intervention accords with McAdams and Cox's [59] views on how people can narrate and reflect on their career-life stories for 'advice' on possible strategies to help them deal with 'personal' issues that impede their career choice making. It is also in keeping with Savickas' [21] view that "[i]n the career development paradigm, especially in personal counseling, counselors facilitate clients in exercising their own agency. In the life-designing paradigm, counselors endeavor to be useful to clients as they collaborate jointly in co-constructing meaning and resolving problems" (p. 138). It is hoped that this career construction counseling strategy can help other young people too, in line with the outcomes achieved by other researchers [47].

#### *4.1. Advice for Counselors Contemplating This Type of Intervention*

First, the intervention described here is based on the view that the distinction between the notions of 'personal' and 'career' counseling is artificial at best. Second, counselors should investigate these notions carefully and decide for themselves whether there are appreciable differences between the two notions. Third, 'new' counselors should under the supervision of experienced counselors learn how to implement the counseling style advocated here. Much of the success of an intervention will depend on the individual skills of the particular counselor.

#### *4.2. Limitations*

We are aware that our particular world view may have influenced our understanding and perceptions during the intervention. The same applies to our personal perspectives, our preferred counseling style, our bias towards young people facing this kind of transition, as well as our stated preference for an integrative approach to career counseling. Furthermore, also the possible integration between personal counseling and life counseling could be influenced by the subjectivity of the researches. Another limitation is that this kind of counseling is simply not available for most young people in most countries. Nevertheless, it is possible to introduce the possibility of group-based counseling using the power of the audience [60]. This is an innovative methodology that does not activate a work group in the traditional sense, but requires a specific theoretical-applicative framework in which the group members are considered as participants in an individual psychological counseling intervention, interacting individually in turn with the counselor, but at the same time they also have the opportunity to form the audience, which listens to the other participants without intervening directly [60].

#### *4.3. Recommendations for Future Research*

Future research should include qualitative (multiple case studies, both individually and in groups) as well as quantitative studies. The effect of longitudinal research on participants should also be investigated and reported on. Finally, auto-ethnography should be considered as a theoretical and conceptual framework for case studies using this approach.

## 5. Conclusions

This article showed how ‘stories’ can be elicited and ‘scores’ obtained simultaneously and then drawn on to help a late adolescent choose an appropriate career and also deal with personal challenges. The results reveal how the participant’s ‘personal’ challenges could be addressed during career counseling to mediate his insecurity, uncertainty, and inability to negotiate a career-related transition. The participant was helped to find a ‘match’ between his traits and appropriate work environments. At the same time, he was guided on how to develop psycho-educationally and psychosocially and, ultimately, to identify his key life themes, reflect on his career-life story, and draw on these reflections (reflexivity) to actively ‘heal’ himself. The career construction approach described here showed how a theory-based practical intervention strategy could be used to promote career counseling that included personal counseling in the case of a participant with deep insecurity in search of career counseling. Forward movement and change were achieved as the participant began to make meaning of his life and develop a sense of purpose regarding his future career-life. The sense of hope he expressed at the end of the intervention augurs well for his future [61]. This approach that includes personal and career counseling can improve processes of reflexivity on what is sustainable for a client—considering their fundamental goals, interests, and values—and thus promoting sustainable career-life projects [12].

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