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Career counseling

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1 Introduction

The career counseling profession is both large and highly influential in the sense that many individuals rely on counselors to guide them in their career decisions and help them find meaning and purpose in their careers. The need for career counseling is substantial. To take the United States as an example, 61% of the 18+ U.S. population indicated that they would seek out career assistance, according to a representative survey conducted by the U.S. National Career Development Association (2011). However, only 24% reported that they had already visited a trained career counselor, which indicates that although a substantial number of the U.S. population has already benefited from career counseling there is also a clear potential for offering career assistance to even more people. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (2016), in the United States over 220,000 career counselors are employed in elementary and secondary schools, college, universities, and professional schools, junior colleges, vocational rehabilitation services, and individual and family services. Around the globe, countries have established a range of career counseling services and policies (Watts & Sultana, 2004) and the European Union has specifically identified career counseling as a critical component to manage human resources, to help individuals and organizations adapt to changes in the world of work, to support citizens in the development of

professional skills, and to secure and enhance economic prosperity of its member states (Council of the European Union, 2008).

There are many distinct schools of thought within the profession, drawing on distinctive theoretical foundations. In a chapter on career counseling in a previous handbook on career studies, Kidd (2007) presented a variety of career development and career counseling theories, followed by a model of general steps in a career counseling process and a summary of research on effectiveness of career counseling. In the current chapter, we focus on the two main trends in contemporary thinking on career counseling: more traditional career guidance and counseling, and career counseling within the life design paradigm that is becoming increasingly important in career counseling (Savickas et al., 2009). Moreover, we provide an updated review on research on the effectiveness of more traditional and recent forms of career counseling.

We start by differentiating between different approaches to career counseling and career guidance. We then outline four characteristics that are typical among different approaches of career guidance and counseling. This will be followed by presenting a counseling process that is aligned with more traditional approaches in career guidance, focusing on helping clients to make better career decisions. Next, we will describe a more modern approach to career counseling based on the life design paradigm. Finally, we will review research investigating the effectiveness of career interventions to promote career development among diverse clients.

2 Career Guidance, Career Counseling, and Life Design

Career counseling can be seen as a specific application of counseling psychology. At its core, counseling psychology is about supporting people to improve the assessment of themselves, their environment, and their current challenges as well as optimizing their experiences and their behavior (Gelso & Fretz, 2001). However, career counseling is often misconceived because the word “counseling” may imply providing someone with expertise and knowledge. The word “counseling” could be interpreted in the way that clients get to know which professions would fit them best through information and advice given by the counselors. According to this conception, the counselor would provide information about certain professions and the labor market in general, based on his or her expertise. The counselor would also suggest specific occupations or career directions that fit the client. Such a view of career counseling is, however, not in

accordance with a modern understanding of career counseling as described in this chapter. Rather, it corresponds to what should be named vocational or career *guidance*. In guidance, the client is treated as an object that ought to be analyzed (e.g., in terms of abilities, interests, personality) and for whom corresponding work environments and occupations ought to be identified. Vocational guidance thus aims to match the client with work that resembles his or her objective traits and abilities. In such an approach, the career counselor acts as an expert for assessment and information about the world-of-work.

In contrast, more recent approaches speak of career counseling or *career construction* (Savickas, 2013) within the *life design* paradigm (Nota & Rossier, 2015; Savickas et al., 2009). According to these approaches, career counseling is about helping clients to construct a subjectively meaningful identity, to increase their self-reflection, and to help them create their career according to their personal identity and life story. This approach can be seen as closely related to what is sometimes referred to as *career coaching*. To what extent the two forms of career assistance overlap depends on the specific content of the career coaching, which can be highly heterogeneous. Generally speaking, however, career coaching is often more related to helping clients develop certain skills or attitudes that should help them in their career development. It thus more closely resembles what can be called a *career development* intervention. Such a perspective differs from career counseling in the way that helping clients in the construction of meaning and identity through narratives and stories (Savickas, 2012) is not the core aim of career coaching.

It is important to note, however, that the modern approach of career counseling does not attempt to replace the more traditional approaches of career guidance. Indeed, both of them can be combined in career interventions. For instance, helping clients to make a career decision and find an occupation which corresponds to their aspirations and opportunities is a typical approach in a career guidance framework rather than counseling. However, many typical counseling activities (e.g., self-reflection and identity construction) can also be integrated into interventions that focus on improving clients' career decision-making. Therefore, career guidance and counseling are complementary to each other and co-exist in career counseling practice without a clear-cut distinction (Savickas, 2012).

2.1 Four core characteristics of career guidance and counseling

Across the traditional different approaches to career interventions from career guidance, career counseling, and life design, four core elements represent common typical characteristics: (1) a focus on psychologically healthy clients; (2) a focus on clients' resources and strengths; (3) a relatively short duration of the guidance/counseling process; and (4) considering the client in context (Gelso & Fretz, 2001).

First, career guidance and counseling are not focused on people with pathological disorders (Gelso & Fretz, 2001). Rather, career guidance and counseling aims to deal with problems, challenges, and topics that every person could be confronted with during his or her lifetime (e.g., career undecidedness, unemployment, lack of knowledge about the labor market, job dissatisfaction). The concepts and interventions in career guidance and counseling are thus primarily based on helping psychologically healthy people (Gelso & Fretz, 2001). Also, empirical findings show that people suffering from serious psychological problems (e.g., depression, anxiety, or panic attacks) benefit less from career interventions than clients without these problems (Whiston & Rahardja, 2008). Counselors therefore need to possess the competencies to recognize psychological disorders and to refer such clients to psychotherapy if needed. The therapy of psychological disorders is thus not a goal of career guidance or counseling, nor does it belong to the sphere of typical competencies of a career counselor.

Second, career guidance and counseling traditionally focus on clients' strengths and resources (Gelso & Fretz, 2001). In career guidance and counseling, it is assumed that every person possesses certain resources and strengths that can be activated and taken advantage of to enhance a positive development.

Third, career guidance and counseling typically imply a short duration process. This is also a consequence of the combination of focusing on psychologically healthy clients as well as their resources and strengths. Indeed, as we discuss below when reviewing the effectiveness of interventions, efficacy studies show that career interventions can generate maximal efficacy with as few as five to six sessions (Brown & Ryan Krane, 2000).

Fourth, career guidance and counseling both conceive of clients as embedded in a specific context. Specifically, career counselors take into account how the individual

interacts with their environment. Therefore, gaining clarity about personal interests, strengths, and goals is only one aspect of the guidance and counseling process. It is equally important to link these personal factors with the environment. This may imply the more proximal social environment (e.g., how personal interests and goals are influenced by and influence the spouse of the client), as well as the more distal macro-environment such as the labor market (e.g., how personal interests and goals are shaped by and may be realized in the current labor market).

3 Career Guidance and Counseling for Better Career Decisions: The CIP Model

Ever since its emergence, career guidance has placed a strong emphasis on helping people with their career decisions and overcoming career indecision (Hartung & Blustein, 2002). Until today, research into the environmental and personal factors that create career indecision (Gati, Krausz, & Osipow, 1996), examinations of different career decision-making styles and their effects on indecision (Gati & Levin, 2012), or strategies to cope with career indecision (Lipshits-Braziler, Gati, & Tatar, 2015), are an important foundation of career guidance and counseling research and practice. One of the most prominent and frequently researched models to assist clients in making better career decisions is the cognitive information-processing approach (CIP) by Sampson, Reardon, Peterson, and Lenz (2004). The CIP postulates a model of career guidance and decision-making based on a general process of problem solving, represented in the CASVE circle (named after the starting letters of the five stages of the proposed process). The first stage of the CASVE Model is communication (C), followed by analysis (A), synthesis (S), valuing (V), and finally execution (E) (see Figure 1).

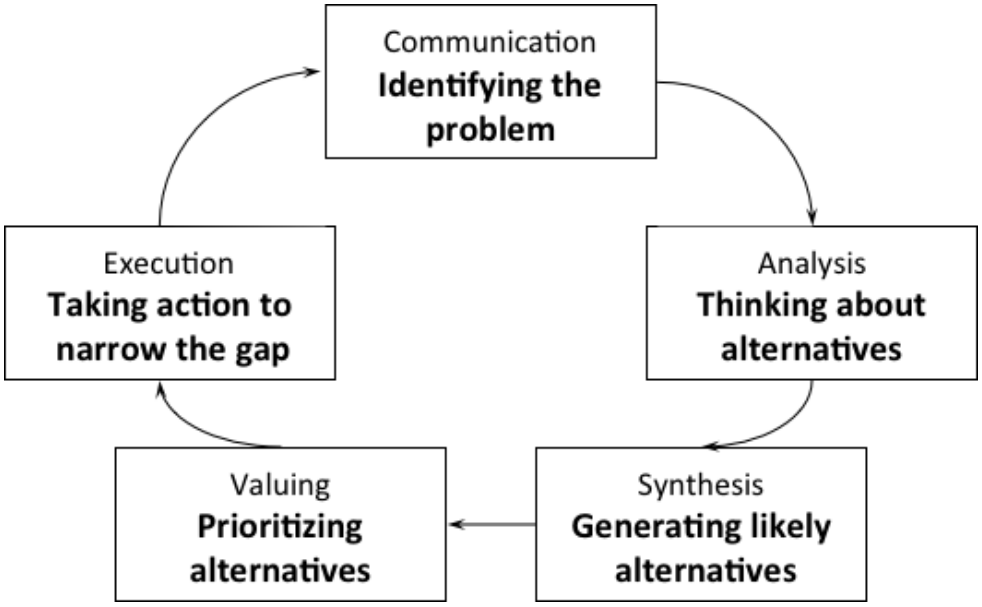

Figure 1: CASVE cycle of career counseling after Sampson, Peterson, Lenz, and Reardon (1992)

During the initial *communication* stage, the current situation of the client is assessed and the discrepancy between the current state and the desired state is clarified. Obtaining a clear understanding of the situation and the current difficulties and challenges of the client is the core task in this phase. Also, counselor and client should define specific and measurable goals for the counseling process as well as identify concrete steps and processes that are necessary to successfully realize the established counseling goals. In this first phase, it is also important to build the foundation for a solid working alliance between the counselor and the client. A clear understanding and mutual agreement upon the goals, the tasks involved in the counseling process, as well as a trusting relationship (i.e., respect, acceptance of the client, and empathy for his or her situation and actions) between the counselor and client, constitute such working alliance (Bordin, 1979).

During the subsequent stage of *analysis*, the client's self-awareness should be enhanced (interests, competencies, goals, personality, values, life situation, influences of the environment). Also, clients should gain a broader knowledge of the working environment and specific vocational possibilities. Clients can receive help in enhancing their reflection about their own person and situation by applying for example psychological assessments (e.g., ability tests, interest inventories), structured interviews, or counseling techniques such as reformulation (rephrasing what the client has said to improve clarity and understanding), summaries (integrating several aspects

of what the client said into a more concise and clear statement), or open questions (questioning that requires further elaboration from the client and that cannot simply be answered by “yes” or “no”). Additionally, improving the client’s knowledge about his or her vocational possibilities can be achieved, for example, if the counselor provides the client with important information about the labor market or certain occupations. In addition, the client could be encouraged and instructed to look for further career information and the counselor would help the client to evaluate and integrate this information and apply it to his or her current situation.

During the *synthesis* stage, possible solutions for the current career problem ought to be developed, which can be done in two steps. During the first step, as many solutions/career options as possible are developed. This process is called elaboration. Second, solutions/career options not corresponding to the client’s identified key aspects of preferred options are filtered out. Through this so-called crystallization process, the client should reduce the large range of considered possibilities to a more manageable number of three to seven alternatives (Sampson et al., 2004). The main purpose of this stage is to get the client to identify a few career alternatives that are both realistic and corresponding to personal key preferences.

During the subsequent *valuing* stage, the options identified during the synthesis stage are evaluated in more detail. Advantages and disadvantages, chances and risk for the client and the environment (e.g., implication for one’s spouse) should be discussed and written down in this stage. Based on such a detailed evaluation of each alternative, the client should then attempt to rank the alternatives according to his or her preferences and thereby determine a first and second choice. The main goals of this phase are thus to conduct a profound analysis of the different options and to make a decision about the next career step.

During the final *execution* stage, a plan or strategy to realize the chosen career option is developed. Hereby, it is important to determine specific intermediate goals, to identify and activate resources of the client, to develop strategies for handling drawbacks during the realization of the plan, and to establish concrete next action steps.

The end of the execution stage leads to a return to the communication stage. At this point, the client and counselor should evaluate if the client had overcome the formerly identified discrepancy between his or her current and desired state. Depending

on the objectives of the counseling process, this evaluation can take place directly during the last counseling session, or some months afterwards. If it turns out that the desired state has not been reached, the client and counselor can initiate a new counseling cycle by repeating the CASVE process.

Theoretically, this cycle can be completed during one counseling session. However, more likely, several sessions will be needed, especially for clients in complex career situations without sufficient environmental support (e.g., familial support, organizational support), or for clients with few competencies (e.g., job skills) or few internal resources (e.g., self-esteem). Moreover, it is possible that completing a single stage can take several sessions until the aims of this stage are satisfactorily achieved. Finally, it should be said that this procedure is a prototype that does not have to be accomplished in exactly the same way as theoretically suggested. Depending on the client and the career issue, it is possible to change the chronology of the stages. For example, if a client already has clear ideas about possible professions but struggles with the decisions between these possibilities, it makes sense to start directly with the valuing stage. If needed, it is always possible to return to earlier stages, for example, if it appears during the valuing stage that the client needs more clarity about his or her personal preferences (analysis stage) or has insufficiently considered alternative possibilities (synthesis stage) (Sampson et al., 2004).

4 The Life Design Paradigm of Career Counseling

Life design has recently emerged as the new paradigm for career counseling in the 21st century (Savickas, 2012; Savickas et al., 2009). Its goal is to initiate activities that foster self-making, career construction, and shape identities (Savickas, 2010). In sum, "life design, from the *project* perspective of social constructionism, views clients as *authors* who may be characterized by autobiographical *stories* and who may be helped to *reflect* on life *themes* with which to construct their careers" (Savickas, 2012, p. 17). As nine scholars from seven countries introduced life design, they justified the need for a new paradigm by invoking the crisis of “the new social arrangement of work” (Savickas et al., 2009, p. 240). This arrangement refers to the new social contract between employees and organizations (i.e., careers are own by the individuals) due to new information technologies and globalization processes. Later, Guichard (2015) detailed three main factors that explain the emergence and importance of the life design

paradigm. First, Western societies have become a *liquid* modernity, because social structures and institutions no longer maintain their shape for a long time (i.e., solidify) but melt. Thus, they cannot serve as frames of reference for individuals' behaviors any more. As a result, individuals have to define by themselves what their lives mean to them. Put differently, their key personal values become the frames of reference that guide their behaviors and actions.

Second, Guichard (2015) argues that the organization of work and the distribution of jobs have changed from predictable career steps to flexible employment. Concretely, workers are gathered in networks for the duration of a specific assignment only, thus distinguishing between core and peripheral workers (i.e., long-term employees versus those hired when the economic market is good). Similarly, self-employment is increasing, and the responsibility of individuals' career trajectories has shifted from the organization to individuals.[1]

Finally, the third factor evoked by Guichard (2015) is that scientific approaches to studying human behaviors have evolved. Behaviors are seen as less determined by individuals' past experiences and are rather understood in terms of meaning constructing processes (Guichard, 2004). Humans are further viewed as less unified but plural, having been described as speaking with different voices (Gergen, 2011), or as made of a collection of self-efficacy beliefs (Bandura, 1977). Such a plural view further implies that humans are in greater search of giving their life unity, meaning, and coherence. For instance, exploring one's specific life themes (Savickas, 2011) allows increased meaning and coherence of the self.

The life design paradigm reunites constructivist and social constructionism theoretical approaches. While the *constructivist* lens conceives that individuals make meaning of the world through their cognitive structures, the *social constructionism* lens sees individuals as co-constructing meaning through narratives and relationships (Hartung, 2013). Thus, reality is highly subjective, both at the individual (psychological constructivism) and collective (social constructionism) levels. Notably, the *narrative*

[1] It should be noted here that the popular notion that careers have become highly flexible and boundaryless is increasingly criticized as being based more on conventional wisdom than scientific evidence. For instance, Rodrigues and Guest (2010) relied on job stability labor data to argue against the collapse of the traditional predictable career model.

perspective focuses on careers as stories that define individuals' identities and provide meaning to their life trajectories (Del Corso & Rehfuss, 2011). In particular, three distinct perspectives that include narratives in career theory and intervention have been suggested (Hartung, 2013): career as meaning making (i.e., work as shaping life's meaning), career as a life theme (i.e., emerging from several career-related tasks), and career as a story. The last form includes an author who tells the story, a specific context of the story, actions to reach a career goal, and resources used to achieve the goal (Hartung, 2013). Specifically, authors build stories about their career experiences because such stories allow them to fulfill personal motives related to purpose (i.e., objective or subjective), value and justification (e.g., being right or good), efficacy (i.e., control), and self-worth (Baumeister & Newman, 1994). Moreover, stories or self-narratives have been argued to help individuals reconstruct their identities during career transitions. Adopting a social constructionist view, Ibarra and Barbulescu (2010) suggested that workers engage in narrative identity work in interpersonal interactions: Based on others' feedback, individuals revise their stories in order to facilitate the expression of their new role identity, which, in turn, fosters adjustment to work transitions.

Further, according to *career construction theory* (Savickas, 2013), careers are constructed as persons make choices in which their self-concepts are expressed, that is, as individuals derive meaning from their vocational behaviors. Specifically, career construction theory has highlighted three key features: (a) vocational personality (i.e., career-related abilities, needs, values, and interests, that foster individuals' reputations among a group of people and define *what* career they construct); (b) career adaptability (i.e., *how* individuals construct their careers, by being concerned about their future as workers, increasing personal control over their vocational future, displaying curiosity by exploring possible selves, and strengthening confidence to pursue their career aspirations); and (c) life themes (i.e., *why* individuals construct their careers, the meaning behind making a specific career choice). As a result, careers are subjectively defined in a coherent and meaningful story that integrates various jobs. Put differently, career experiences from the past, present, and those expected in the future are reunited into a coherent life theme.

4.1 Career counseling interventions from a life design perspective

Overall, life design fosters career counseling interventions that make meaning of experiences (Hartung, 2013). This is achieved through autobiographical stories that link individuals' present with their past and future (Savickas, 2012). Specifically, four steps of a life design intervention have been identified (see Figure 2; Savickas, 2012, 2015) (see Figure 2).

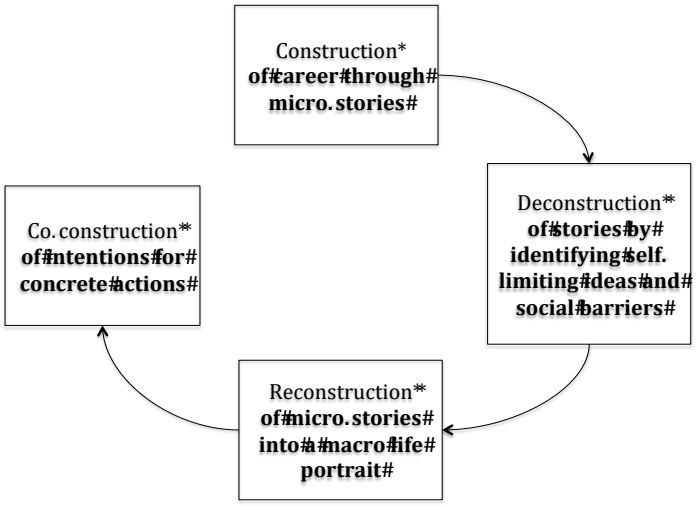

Figure 2: Career counseling steps in a life design approach after (Savickas, 2012, 2015)

In the first step of *construction*, career counselors aim to help a client construct his or her career through small stories. Concretely, Savickas (2015) suggested that after having explored clients' goals for the plot that they would like to co-construct in the career counseling process, career counselors asked five basic questions to foster stories about the origins of the self. Such questions explore clients' favorite book or movie, magazines or television shows, a motto, role models, and early memories. Further, career counselors need to ask clients to describe the circumstances under which they have been disconnected from the current episode of their story (i.e., a tension). Doing so, clients engage in narratives that shape such transitional discontinuations. Second, career counselors and clients *deconstruct* these stories by identifying self-limiting ideas and cultural barriers, which overcome more "life-enhancing alternatives" (Savickas, 2015, p. 143). Third, career counselors and clients work on a *reconstruction* from micro- to macro-narratives, in order to rearrange stories into a life portrait (i.e., identity

narrative). Fourth, the life portrait is revised so that the identity narrative becomes clearer. Such revisions further provide the opportunity to explore clients' emotions and inner thoughts; and represent a means for coping with current problems. This last step is thus referred to as the *co-construction* of intentions, given that a clearer life portrait can be more easily extended into the future and guide concrete actions.

In order to successfully conduct career counseling based on a life design approach, McIlveen (2015) highlighted that career counselors need both basic and enhanced competencies for life design. While the former include general competencies that are needed to conduct career guidance (e.g., psychological assessment, knowledge about the world-of-work), enhanced competencies are specific to the life-design paradigm and allow career counselors to reformulate clients' life stories. Among them, *dialogical interpretation* can be related to conversations involved in the narrative process of an autobiographical storytelling, where career counselors adopt a specific position. Dialogical interpretation prevents career counselors from adopting the position of an expert, as in the case of career guidance. By contrast, career counselors in life designing need to adopt the position of a committed co-editor or co-author, while the client is in the position of the editor or author. Put differently, the professional is the carpenter, while the client is the architect (Savickas, 2015). A second enhanced competency, the *ethic of critical reflexivity,* serves the development of professional skills and the production of new knowledge. Concretely, having space to reflect upon one's practice through supervision allows career counselors to deal with the levels of intimacy and trust necessary to work with clients in the position of a co-author.

5 Effectiveness of Career Interventions

5.1 General effectiveness

Given the variety of different approaches regarding how career guidance and counseling can be conducted, the question emerges if career interventions have in fact benefits for clients' career development. Over the last decades, it has become well-established that career interventions generally have a positive effect on diverse outcomes of career development (for recent overviews see Hooley, 2014; Whiston, Li, Goodrich Mitts, & Wright, 2017; Whiston & Noblin James, 2013). Most typically, the success of career interventions is assessed with outcomes such as increased levels of career decidedness, career exploration activities, or career knowledge. The first meta-

analysis supporting the general effectiveness of career interventions was carried out by Spokane and Oliver (1983). They showed that clients receiving various kinds of guidance and counseling showed on average a greater improvement in outcome criteria such as career decidedness and career knowledge than 81% of a control group without an intervention. Later meta-analyses found a medium effect size of .34 for career choice courses for adults (Baker & Taylor, 1998), or mean effect sizes between .30 and .80 across different career interventions (Brown & Ryan Krane, 2000; Whiston et al., 2017; Whiston, Sexton, & Lasoff, 1998). The strength of these effects is comparable with the effectiveness of other psychological interventions in counseling and psychotherapy (Whiston, 2002). If we take a conservative value of the effectiveness of career interventions with an effect size of .30, this means that the average client after an intervention shows higher values in the assessed outcomes than 62% of a control group without an intervention (Whiston, 2002). In a review of the last 45 years of career intervention research, Spokane and Nguyen (2016) concluded that research has made great progress in studying the effectiveness of career interventions. However, they also indicated that, instead of only restrictedly focusing on results and outcomes of an intervention, an enhanced focus on the evaluation of the processes in career counseling is now necessary. Additionally, Spokane and Nguyen (2016) urged future interventions not only to be designed and evaluated for single clients or smaller groups but also for whole populations (for example school graduates, adults from a socially disadvantaged background). Finally, they pointed out that more research on long-term interventions, containing several points of intervention over time, would be needed. Despite these limitations in the current research and needs for future investigations into the processes and effectiveness of career interventions, one can state that diverse kinds of career interventions generally have a positive and significant effect on clients.

5.2 Effectiveness of specific types of career interventions

While the general effectiveness of career interventions has been confirmed, several meta-analyses suggest that different forms of career interventions are associated with different levels of effectiveness for the same outcomes (Oliver & Spokane, 1988; Whiston et al., 2017; Whiston et al., 1998). Generally, individual counseling achieves the biggest effects per session. However, it is also the most expensive and time-consuming approach. Also, meta-analyses showed that interventions lacking direct support from a counselor (e.g., self-exploration, computer programs) were significantly less effective

than interventions that included a direct contact with a qualified counselor (Whiston, Brecheisen, & Stephens, 2003; Whiston et al., 2017; Whiston et al., 1998). The most recent meta-analyses on this topic (Whiston et al., 2003; Whiston et al., 2017) also reported that various types of interventions are associated with different levels of effectiveness. However, often these differences were not statistically significant. Significant differences in the mean value of effectiveness appeared nevertheless between unstructured group counseling (where there is a freely held discussion about certain topics) and structured workshops, which, according to the analyses of Whiston and colleagues (2003), proved to be significantly more effective. This may be the case because well-designed structured interventions contain more elements that make career interventions particularity effective (see more on this below) (Whiston et al., 2003). Additionally, both recent meta-analyses reported a significant variance in the effects of the career workshops. This suggests that a positive mean effect for a certain kind of intervention (e.g., workshops) does not automatically make all interventions of that kind similarly effective.

Other studies examined the influence of the duration of a career intervention on its effectiveness. Somewhat surprisingly, meta-analyses (Whiston et al., 2003; Whiston et al., 1998) found no strict linear relation between the duration of an intervention and its effectiveness. Hence, longer career interventions might not automatically be more effective. The biggest effect size was found for interventions with a duration of nine or ten sessions (Whiston et al., 1998). However, another meta-analysis on this topic (Brown & Ryan Krane, 2000) showed that the clients' subjective evaluation of the efficacy of career counseling increased strongly with every session, reached its peak with the fourth or fifth session, and fell dramatically afterwards. Therefore, from the client's point of view, a counseling process with four or five sessions showed the highest efficacy.

These results have many important implications for career counseling practice. They reveal that short interventions also can achieve solid effects if they are well-planned and structured. Thus, structured workshops especially seem to be an effective and cost-effective intervention form for many clients. Furthermore, the results of these studies point to the central role of the counselor for an intervention to be effective. Interventions where clients worked all by themselves, using self-exploration activates or websites, were distinctively less effective than working with a counselor in person.

Moreover, the results imply that the biggest effects in the shortest time possible can be achieved by individual career counseling. However, if the focus is on assisting as many people as possible with limited resources, group interventions, specifically in the form of structured workshops, could be applied.

5.3 Effectiveness of life design interventions

While most existing intervention research was conducted within more traditional career guidance and counseling frameworks, recent research has started to investigate the effectiveness of interventions based on the life design paradigm. An increasing number of publications have noted the potential usefulness of many life design interventions across various populations, ranging from young (Masdonati & Fournier, 2015) to older adults (Froidevaux, in press). Some studies reported the effectiveness of life design interventions through increased career adaptability, among Italian middle school students using an online life design career intervention group (Nota, Santilli, & Soresi, 2016), and among South African adolescents using group-based life design counseling sessions (Maree & Symington, 2015). Other studies further reported beneficial results of life design interventions on career decision-making. For instance, group-based life design counseling sessions (i.e., career-story interview) allowed Italian entrepreneurs to decrease their career decision-making difficulties (i.e., lack of information and inconsistent information) and to increase their career decision-making self-efficacy (Di Fabio & Maree, 2012). In addition, life-design group (LDG) settings allowed U.S. undergraduate students to decrease their career indecision and increase their readiness for making career decisions about an academic major (Barclay & Stoltz, 2016). Finally, an improvement in vocational certainty – but not in career maturity – was observed in a case study with a Portuguese adolescent, using life-design counseling (Cardoso, Goncalves, Duarte, Silva, & Alves, 2016). In sum, a high degree of heterogeneity characterizes the life-design interventions that have been evaluated thus far, as they include both face-to-face and virtual sessions, in both individual and group career counseling settings.

5.4 Effectiveness of certain career intervention elements

Given the large array of existing career interventions, an important question to be addressed is whether effective career interventions share some common elements. Several studies showed that in psychological counseling more generally, factors such as

clients' abilities, strengths, or attitudes in addition to a solid counseling relationship (i.e., working alliance) between counselor and client were vital for the effectives of counseling (Ahn & Wampold, 2001). This suggests that which specific counseling techniques or models are applied seems to be less important for a successful counseling outcome compared to more general factors, such as the quality of the helping relationship between the client and the counselor. In fact, diverse authors (e.g., Corey, 1996) emphasized a real, emphatic, and respectful relationship between the counselor and the client in the sense of Rogers (1951), as the most important factor for the success and effectiveness of any counseling. Supporting the importance of the client-counselor relationship, in career counseling specifically, several studies (e.g., Anderson & Niles, 2000; Masdonati, Massoudi, & Rossier, 2009; Masdonati, Perdrix, Massoudi, & Rossier, 2014) found that adult clients considered the emotional support provided by the counselor as well as a positive working relationship as the most crucial factors for the success in career counseling. In sum, the relationship element of the working alliance (Bordin, 1979) seems to be particularly important for career counseling effectiveness.

Despite the importance of the general helping relationship, a meta-analysis (Brown & Ryan Krane, 2000) and a follow-up study by Brown and colleagues (2003) concluded that five elements make a career intervention especially effective:

1. Clients reflect upon and write down their career and life goals (e.g., by having an exercise book or by the application of written exercises);
2. Counselors provide individual interpretations and feedback to the clients (e.g., based on test results);
3. Counselors provide current information about the world of work and support clients in obtaining such information outside of the counseling session;
4. Clients learn about effective career behavior by models and mentors; and
5. Counselors help clients to develop supportive networks to help them achieve their career goals.

However, a recent meta-analysis focusing on a different outcome criterion (i.e., career decision-making self-efficacy vs. career maturity in Brown & Ryan Krane, 2000) could not replicate these findings entirely. This meta-analysis also found that workbooks and written exercises seemed to be critical elements of effective career interventions. In addition, this study found that counselor support, values clarification, and psychoeducational interventions were proven to be specifically effective. Hence, the

elements of effective interventions identified by Brown and colleagues (2003) remain an important point of reference when planning and conducting career interventions. However, which elements are most effective might also depend on the specific outcome that an intervention aims to enhance.

6 Conclusions and Avenues for Future Research

Career counseling as a specific application of psychology and as part of the broader field of counseling psychology represents a varied array of types of career interventions in which diverse groups of clients are supported in various concerns about educational, vocational, and career issues. Among others, the scientific literature on career guidance and counseling contains models that focus on how to structure a guidance and counseling process, how to assist clients in their career decision-making, as well as how to help clients construct a meaningful career identity. Further, the effectiveness of different career interventions is relatively well documented. However, research on career counseling effectiveness has focused mainly on results such as career decidedness, knowledge about careers, or planning clarity. Future research should also increasingly examine how important aspects of modern career theories could be promoted by career counseling, such as a protean career orientation (Hall, 2004), social-cognitive aspects of career self-management (Lent, 2013), or personal and environmental career resources (Hirschi, 2012). Therefore, future research should focus on the effectiveness and processes of interventions based on recent career development and career counseling theories, to identify which kind of intervention achieves what kind of short- and long-term outcomes, with what kind of clients.

This seems especially true for the life-design paradigm. Since its introduction (Savickas et al., 2009), research and practice in career counseling within the life design paradigm has grown rapidly. However, three open questions remain regarding future research in this area. First, as highlighted above, many forms of life design interventions have emerged (i.e., individual and group settings, specific booklets or interviews) and a variety of methods have been used to measure their effectiveness (i.e., questionnaires, thematic content analyses, case-studies). Thus, we believe that it is important to avoid confusion stemming from a growing number of interventions that refer to the life design paradigm but use very different methods and processes. Future research needs to more systematically compare the characteristics and the relative effectiveness of the existing

interventions, for example regarding the promotion of client reflexivity (Savickas, 2016). Replication studies of the effectiveness of a specific intervention are further required. Second, despite the initial support of its effectiveness, there is a need to identify specific outcome criteria according to which career counselors may assess whether clients have defined a clearer view of themselves, or have implemented concrete actions that are closer to their life portrait and core values (Cohen-Scali & Kokosowski, 2010). Finally, while career guidance and career counseling are recognized to co-exist in career counseling practice (Savickas, 2012), it is necessary to define more precisely the criteria that would determine in which situation, and for which client, it would be more advisable to focus on one or the other approach. For instance, Cohen-Scali and Kokosowski (2010) have argued that life design interventions were not only lengthy and demanding for clients, but that the reliance on dialog and self-reflection might limit their applicability to many populations (e.g., those with lower levels of education or an immigration background) and counseling settings (e.g., short term interventions).

The overall challenge for the future practical application of career counseling is to continue developing professional standards and to apply them over a broad range on a global scale. For this, the profession of career counseling possesses valuable experience over decades and profound research. These advantages should be specifically integrated in career counseling education and practice. Additionally, the training of career counselors based on modern approaches to career development and counseling should be continuously improved and developed. In our view, this should include integrating recent scientific knowledge about career development. This is how career counseling will continue to thrive as a field of research and practice that encompasses many competencies, processes, and lines of scientific research.

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