

An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis of Adult Clients' Experience of My Career Chapter

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Abstract

This paper reports a study of adult clients' experience of *My Career Chapter*; which is a theoretically-informed, qualitative career assessment and counselling procedure. *My Career Chapter* engenders personal exploration through a client's writing and reading aloud a career-related autobiography, which is formulated on the basis of structured steps and a sentence-completion process. In a predominantly qualitative, mixed method design (i.e., QUAL+quan), interpretative phenomenological analysis of six interview transcripts constructed three major clusters representative of clients' experiences: Implications for instructions and guidelines; induction of personal contemplation and self-reflection; and positive emotional experience. Secondary quantitative data aligned with the primary qualitative results. The results of this study were consistent with and extend upon previous research; and were indicative of the safety and potential of *My Career Chapter* as a narrative career assessment and counselling procedure for adults.

An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis of Adult Clients' Experience of My Career Chapter

With notable flagship publications leading and guiding the field (e.g., Cochran, 1997; Peavy, 1997), narrative career counselling is an accepted approach to practice, with a variety of emergent applied theoretical frameworks, and assessment and intervention techniques and instruments (McIlveen & Patton, 2007a). Yet, despite the proliferation of narrative assessment procedures—under the aegis of constructivism—there has been insufficient research into their outcomes and processes (McIlveen & Patton, 2007a); which is a state of affairs consistent with equivalently limited research into career counselling outcome and process broadly (Whiston & Oliver, 2005). This paper contributes to the applied research literature on *process* (cf. Heppner & Heppner, 2003) by reporting on an investigation into adult clients' experience of a new narrative assessment and counselling procedure: *My Career Chapter: A Dialogical Autobiography* (McIlveen, 2006)—shortened to *My Career Chapter* for convenience.

Description of My Career Chapter

My Career Chapter is a theoretically-informed procedure based upon the Systems Theory Framework (Patton & McMahon, 2006), the Theory of Career Construction (Savickas, 2005), and the Theory of Dialogical Self (Hermans & Kempen, 1993); and, moreover, it is informed by scholarship toward those theories' integration (McIlveen, 2007c; McIlveen & Patton, 2007b). *My Career Chapter* facilitates clients' writing of a career-related autobiography ranging across their views on myriad factors and influences upon their careers, using a guided and structured format, presented in a printed workbook. It is prescribed by counsellors as a homework task, should an interpretative narrative approach be chosen as an appropriate intervention.

With respect to the writing of the manuscript, the client works through seven *Steps* laid out in a printed booklet, beginning in Step 1 with general career-related questions as “warm-up exercises” to orient the user to the autobiographical project. In Step 2, the client contemplates the proximal *influences* (e.g., personal: gender, interests, values; interpersonal: relationships, family) and distal influences (e.g., social: community groups; environmental/societal: labour market) described in the Systems Theory Framework. This contemplation process is facilitated in Step 3: It requires the client to rate how compatible or incompatible the influences in his or her life are with one another, in a matrix with proximal and distal influences opposing one another. The 5-point rating scale includes -2 = *very much incompatible*, -1 = *mostly incompatible*, 0 = *neither compatible nor incompatible*, +1 = *mostly compatible*, to +2 = *very much incompatible*. The compatibility matrix task operationalised the notion that a person, as a *dialogical self* (Hermans & Kempen, 1993), can take multiple internal and external positions on himself or herself. Methodologically, it was fashioned upon the principles of an established psychometric derived from the Theory of Dialogical Self: The *Personal Position Repertoire* (Hermans, 2001). Having completed the compatibility task which aims to “decentre” the client's thinking of himself or herself, the client then writes the bulk of the autobiographical manuscript in Step 4: A structured process consisting of a series of part-sentences associated with each of the influences of the Systems Theory Framework. This was modelled after the sentence-completion procedure for exploring ego development (Loevinger, 1985). Each influence is expressed in a past, present, and future sentence-stem, along with two sentence-stems containing ratings of how strong the influence is for the client in terms of its impact, and how the client feels in relation to it. For example, the career influence *age* would entail the following:

When I was younger.....

My age allows me to.....

By the time I reach retirement I want.....

I mostly feel *very positive* / *positive* / *indifferent* / *negative* / *very negative* in relation to my age because.....

My age has a *very positive* / *positive* / *neutral* / *negative* / *very negative* impact upon by career life because.....

Upon completing the sentence-completion task (which is the bulk of the autobiography), in Step 5 the client must submit the draft to an “editor” for proof reading and review. The editor, in this case, is the client himself or herself, but 5 years younger. The client reads the manuscript aloud to himself or herself, as if he or she were the younger self, and then in reply writes editorial comments to the older (current) self. Upon receiving the editorial comments, the older (current) self writes back to the editor with a summary of the career story and future. This self-editorial process was founded upon a similar procedure used to generate dialogical transactions with oneself (cf. Hermans & Kempen, 1993). In Step 6 the manuscript is completed by the writing of a conclusion section with a focus upon strengths, obstacles, and the future. Step 7 is an open space for writing reflective ideas and experiences that may arise over days subsequent to completion of the manuscript. The writing phase can take up to 2 hours; it may be completed in one sitting or over several periods according to the client’s preferences.

The completed manuscript is subsequently read aloud by the counsellor in the next session. Whilst engaged in the reading process, the counsellor may elect to form his/her own interpretations of the text, and present them to the client unilaterally or co-constructively. Following the reading and interpretation process, the manuscript and subsequent dialogue are integrated into counselling thereafter. The dual reading of the manuscript—the client with himself or herself, and subsequently with a counsellor—is a crucial feature of *My Career Chapter*, serving to further embed its theoretical dialogical processes. Hence, *My Career Chapter* not only engenders personal exploration through writing and hearing a story, its resultant text serves as idiographic assessment data. Accordingly, its design aligns with evidence pertaining to the value of written exercises and individualized interpretation described by Brown and Ryan Krane (2000).

My Career Chapter is similar to the *My System of Career Influences* reflection activity (McMahon, Patton, & Watson, 2005, 2007), which is likewise based upon the Systems Theory Framework. Both facilitate users’ exploring their career influences and documenting their understanding in a workbook. A difference between the two is that *My Career Chapter* is predominantly verbal in process, whereas *My System of Career Influences* is more inclusive of visual and spatial processing through clients drawing their systems of career influences. Whilst they are not *parallel forms* in a psychometric sense, they present a useful alternative for practitioners wishing to operationalise the Systems Theory Framework and a choice between a verbal and visual procedure, depending upon the counsellors’ and/or clients’ needs and preferences.

Research Status

The theoretical origins of *My Career Chapter* have been explored critically and reflexively in an autoethnographic study (McIlveen, 2007b). Research has investigated counsellors’ experience of *My Career Chapter* in a formal training program, which was inclusive of their personal application of the procedure and their subsequent professional appraisal of its construction and potential clinical utility for adults (McIlveen, 2007a) and adolescents (McIlveen, Patton, & Hoare, 2007). Both of those studies found that *My Career Chapter* closely aligned with the recommendations for the construction and administration of qualitative career assessment procedures proposed by McMahon and colleagues (2003). It was recommended, nevertheless, that *My Career Chapter*’s instructions be modified or simplified, particularly for the compatibility task of Step 3. A study of adult clients’

reactions to a pilot version of the procedure indicated that it was clinically safe with respect to not distressing or harming clients, and that there was evidence of a mild positive reaction to the process of its completion, including feelings of optimism and self-agency (McIlveen, Ford, & Dun, 2005). The current study extends the previous research into adult clients' reactions by intensively investigating the experiences of individuals who used the procedure in relation to their seeking constructivist-oriented career counselling. Unlike the quantitative study by McIlveen, Ford and Dun, this study investigated clients' experiences using a qualitative lens.

Method

Research Design

This study sought to understand the unique experiences of clients and attempted to synthesize their experiences into a composite, meaningful account. We deployed a concurrent nested mixed method design, with priority given to qualitative data over quantitative data (i.e., QUAL+quan) (Hanson, Creswell, Clark, Petska, & Creswell, 2005). Similar to research into counsellors' experiences of *My Career Chapter* (McIlveen, 2007a), the current study used the qualitative research method, interpretative phenomenological analysis (Larkin, Watts, & Clifton, 2006; Smith, 1996; Smith & Osborn, 2003) to capture the unique experiences of the clients. Interpretative phenomenological analysis is phenomenological and hermeneutic in theoretical origin and aims to facilitate understanding of how individuals make sense of their psychosocial worlds, experiences, and events. Application of interpretative phenomenological analysis in this study aimed to explore clients' experience of *My Career Chapter* with respect to their working through each of the Steps in the booklet, writing and reading their manuscript, and then hearing their manuscript being read back to them by a counsellor in the interpretive follow-up session. Clients' interview data for the interpretative phenomenological analysis were supplemented by quantitative rating scale data derived from semi-structured interview schedules and a questionnaire, both of which are described below as sources of data.

Participants

A State-registered psychologist, who worked in the Career Service at the University of Southern Queensland and who was trained in the application of *My Career Chapter*, collaborated in this study by selecting the participants for the study and by meeting in a session with the participants for the reading and interpretation process. Individuals who demonstrated high levels of career-related anxiety and sought urgent attention at triage were excluded from the study and referred to standard career counselling services offered by the university's Career Service. Interpretative phenomenological analysis requires small, homogenous samples, with their homogeneity being theoretically or purposefully defined without the criterion of generalisability (Smith & Osborn, 2003). As *My Career Chapter* was originally configured in the field for a particular population of clients (i.e., adults with relatively high English verbal ability), *purposive selection* (Polkinghorne, 2005) was used for this study. Thus, participants were limited to: (a) adults; (b) seeking a career exploration experience consistent with a constructivist approach; (c) whose level of post-secondary education was of at least undergraduate level; and (d) whose first language was English. There were seven participants, with ages ranging from 24 to 62 years, six female and one male. All but one had completed an undergraduate bachelor-level degree, with one participant having taken leave from her senior years of undergraduate study for the birth of her child.

Sources of Data

Participants completed *My Career Chapter* in their own time and then returned for a 1 hour follow-up session with the counsellor in which their manuscript was read by the counsellor and interpreted co-constructively. Approximately 1 week after their sessions with

the counsellor, participants were interviewed for no more than 1 hour in a follow-up appointment. The interviews followed a semi-structured format to elicit the users' experience of completing *My Career Chapter*, and of the reading and interpretive session with the counsellor. Following interpretative phenomenological analysis guidelines (Smith & Osborn, 2003), the interviews entailed semi-structured protocols. Interviews were electronically recorded and professionally transcribed. Two semi-structured interview schedules were used for this procedure, and these were followed by a print questionnaire.

Client Experience Interview. The first interview schedule was formulated specifically for this study. The items covered participants' experience overall and then specifically with each Step of the process of completing *My Career Chapter*. Procedurally, the client was reminded of each Step and then questioned on their experience of it (e.g., You would have noticed that some of the sentence-parts contained a past, present, and future element. What was that like for you?). This set of questions was supplemented with the personal items from the bank of questions in the Reflecting on My Career Influences exercise (McMahon & Patton, 2006, p. 106). The questions pertained to constructivist notions of *connectedness* (e.g., What was it like for you to have the undivided attention of someone listening to your career story?), *reflection* (e.g., What was it like for you to have a space where you could take time to reflect on your career story written in *My Career Chapter*?), *meaning-making* (e.g., What new or different understandings do you have about yourself as a result of completing *My Career Chapter*?), *learning* (e.g., What is the most significant learning process for you from completing *My Career Chapter*?), and *agency* (e.g., What steps may you take in your own life as a result of completing *My Career Chapter*?).

Helpful Aspects of Therapy Interview. This interview schedule was adapted from the original version (Llewelyn, 1988) and an online version (Elliot, 1993). This open-ended semi-structured questionnaire has been used in counselling and psychotherapy process research, and is completed by clients at the end of their session with the counsellor. Clients are asked to describe the most helpful event in their session with the counsellor and to rate its helpfulness using a simple Likert-scale ranging from 1 = *extremely hindering* to 9 = *extremely helpful*. In addition, clients are also asked to describe an event that was unhelpful or hindering. In this study, clients were invited to describe any experience in the writing, reading, or interpretation processes of *My Career Chapter* that was helpful or unhelpful. The original schedule was modified to include wording referring to *My Career Chapter* and career-related issues.

Client Reactions System Questionnaire. Following the semi-structured interview schedules, the participants' reactions to *My Career Chapter* were recorded using the Client Reactions System (Hill, Helms, Spiegel, & Tichenor, 1988)—as was used in previous research (McIlveen, Ford, & Dun, 2005). The scale consists of 14 positive reactions (e.g., I felt understood, or hopeful) and 7 negative reactions (e.g., worse, confused). Participants were instructed to rate their level of agreement using a seven-point Likert-scale ranging from 1 = *strongly disagree* to 7 = *strongly agree*. For this study, the instructions were modified to suit the study with reference to thinking about their experience of writing, reading, and hearing their *My Career Chapter*. The results from this questionnaire were used firstly to triangulate the qualitative interview data and secondly to make another check to ensure that participants, as client-users of *My Career Chapter*, were not adversely affected.

Data Analysis

Six interview transcripts were analysed using interpretative phenomenological analysis. However, due to a technical failure in one interview, only the last half of that interview was properly recorded; and consequently the handwritten notes on the Helpful Aspects of Therapy Interview form and Client Reactions System Questionnaire for that case were retained as data for a check of trustworthiness.

The recommended procedure for interpretative phenomenological analysis was followed. Prior to commencing the analysis, the transcripts were read while listening to the audio recording, so as to refresh the researcher's memory, note transcript omissions or errors, and to actively re-engage with the dialogue of the interviews. The initial step of interpretative phenomenological analysis entailed repeatedly reading through one interview transcript before working through any of the others. Multiple readings sought evidence for induction of specific experiences which were subsequently rolled-up into themes. The thematic level of analysis was conceptually higher than that of the first and aimed to create psychological understandings of the text, which were grounded in an individual's interview, yet sufficiently abstract to allow for connection with the themes from other cases. The themes were reviewed to determine conceptual clusters and checked against the raw transcripts for meaningfulness. A text quotation which was indicative of clusters' and themes' meanings was retained for exemplification. The entire process was repeated for each transcript. Thus each individual's transcript was analysed idiographically so as to create a full account of his or her experience. Following the iterative procedure performed on each case, a final list of themes and superordinate clusters was constructed so as to indicate the aggregated meanings from the group. This interpretative process entailed repeatedly moving back and forth across the participants' themes and checking if themes were conceptually related to a superordinate cluster. This list was used to enable a thematic reporting of results.

Trustworthiness. A check was made to assure trustworthiness of the data and the analysis according to the paradigm-specific requirements for constructivist research (Morrow, 2005). Whilst the data saturated relatively early in the analysis, care was taken to abduct negative evidence and discrepancy within the data to ensure a balance of participants' experiences and to satisfy the criterion of fairness. Accordingly, whenever appropriate, divergent views have been presented in the results section. The criterion of *ontological authenticity* requires that participants' data be expanded and elaborated. This requirement was satisfied as an inherent part of the interpretative phenomenological analysis interview process, in which their experiences were elaborated to the point of shared understanding with the interviewer. *Educative authenticity* was satisfied through individual discussions with the participants regarding how they learned through completing *My Career Chapter* and participating in the reflective process. *Catalytic authenticity* pertains to action which is stimulated by the research process and this is covered in the *Discussion* section. Morrow's criteria pertaining to *meaning*, especially shared meaning, were satisfied through the process of the participants being able to confirm their transcripts and the themes derived from them. It should be noted, however, interpretative phenomenological analysis does not require the final interpretation to be a shared construction, as it ultimately represents meanings generated and owned by the researcher, rather than the participants.

In this study, the quantitative results derived from the Helpful Aspects of Therapy and Client Reactions Systems questionnaire were primarily interpreted idiographically alongside each participant's interview transcript. Nevertheless, the Likert-scale data were summarized nomothetically to act as a supplementary source of data for the purposes of triangulation and establishing a further indicator of saturation and trustworthiness.

Results

The interpretative phenomenological analysis derived four superordinate clusters from the participants' interview transcripts: *Instructions and guidelines, induction of contemplation and self-reflection, hearing and interpretation, and positive experience.* These clusters are described first and then supplemented by the results of the quantitative measures of helpful aspects and reactions.

Instructions and Guidelines

Notwithstanding participants' completion of *My Career Chapter* without major concerns, there was a consistency in themes around the instructions and guidelines for completing the procedure. Participants indicated that the instructions should be simplified and enhanced to enable them to comprehend fully what was to be undertaken. The need for instructional clarity was best exemplified in some participants feeling somewhat confused with complex components, most particularly with the Step 3 compatibility task in which career influences are compared and contrasted in a matrix using a rating scale. One participant recommended presentation of the Systems Theory Framework figure, used in Step 2, in colour so as to improve ease of use.

Induction of Contemplation and Self-reflection

The participants uniformly described how the procedural structure of *My Career Chapter* induced contemplation and reflection upon their career. The contemplation was attributed to the step-wise approach and the specific tasks and procedures. With respect to the overall experience of *My Career Chapter*, one participant indicated that it was enjoyable because it served as a lifelong reflection, and stated:

Tracking through what I've done in my life and thinking about what I might have done differently if I'd been going through study now, and that sort of thing, and starting out (Participant 2).

With respect to the specific procedural elements of *My Career Chapter*, the sentence-stem procedure in the manuscript was deemed useful as a structure. One participant stated:

It sort of, as I said before, makes you take stock of where you've been, what you are now, and things in the future, which sometimes you don't do. (Participant 6)

It was evident that participants were conscious of reflecting upon aspects of life that they would not ordinarily associate with their career, but rather with their personal life (e.g., relationships). There was no evidence that this was taken as impertinent or offensive, but seemed to be taken as surprising that career would extend beyond work-related topics and that personal life would likewise extend into the domain of career. Having heard her story read out by the counsellor, one participant felt affirmed that she summarised her family, but was interested to summarise how it touched on her career:

I know how strong my family ethics are, I kind of knew, but I didn't realize it was coming out in other spots, so that was interesting (Participant 1).

Hearing and Interpretation

Participants uniformly expressed joy, pleasure, or satisfaction, in hearing their manuscripts being read by the counsellor in the follow-up session. It was evident that the participants felt personally moved by hearing their stories read aloud and being focused upon so intensely. The breadth of the storying of the person's whole life was also emotively potent; for example:

I found it a little bit, not embarrassing, I guess it was a little bit, just because you're looking at all aspects of your life (Participant 5)

This participant was not perturbed by the emotional intensity, but somewhat surprised that a career counselling experience could be so. The reading aloud and hearing of the manuscript also contributed to participants' "making sense" of their stories; for example:

It made a lot more sense when she [the counsellor] read it than when I was reading it. Well, actually, it sounded like a story; and it sort of, because I was sitting and listening to it, things were clicking into place (Participant 3).

Positive Experience

Despite their minor troubles with some aspects of the procedure, participants described the overall experience as positive and one from which they felt they had learned something new or had something experientially re-affirmed.

Helpfulness Rating Scale

In the Helpful Aspects of Therapy questionnaire, participants were asked to rate the helpfulness of a particular experience. As revealed in the interpretative phenomenological analysis, the participants identified the reading and interpretation process as the most helpful, with others summarized the reflective experience as the most helpful. The median score for the helpfulness of the experiences was 8, with scores ranging from 8 to 9; which is indicative of *greatly helpful* on the Likert-scale. Although not rated as hindering by the participants, the compatibility matrix was highlighted for its complexity in procedure. This result aligns with those derived from the interpretative phenomenological analysis.

Participant Reactions

The participants' positive and negative reactions to *My Career Chapter* are respectively summarised in Tables 1 and 2 (see Table 3 in the Appendix for individual participant's scores). The median scores for each item of the Client Reactions System indicate that the participants felt positive about the experience of completing *My Career Chapter*. Moreover, the median score for the items on the negative scale indicated that there was no evidence of a general negative reaction to the procedure. The higher individual scores on items pertaining to being confused, having a lack of direction, or feeling stuck, were clarified with individuals and attributed to concerns with the instructions and guidelines, as revealed in the interpretative phenomenological analysis. All scores for feeling worse fell within the neutral to strongly disagree range; clearly indicative of no emotional deterioration as a result of the procedure. The one participant who endorsed feeling scared attributed this to her concerns about revealing her personal life to the counsellor, but was able to confirm that this was an initial reaction of apprehension, rather than a serious problem with the experience overall.

Insert Table 1 here

Insert Table 2 here

Discussion

This study sought to explore adult clients' experiences of *My Career Chapter*, inclusive of the writing, reading, and interpretation processes. As such, this study contributes to the literature on clients' experience of career assessment and counselling, particularly in reference to process variables identified by Heppner and Heppner (2003) and the critical ingredients of written exercises and individualized interpretation (Brown & Ryan Krane, 2000). The study found that participants enjoyed most aspects of completing *My Career Chapter* and derived a personal experience with respect to enhancing or developing their self-awareness of careers. This study again revealed the need to revisit the instructions and the guidelines for completing *My Career Chapter*, with the aim of making them clearer and simpler; a result consistent with the opinions of counsellors revealed in previous research (McIlveen, 2007a; McIlveen, Patton, & Hoare, 2007). As with research into the pilot version (McIlveen, Ford, & Dun, 2005), participants' reactions to the procedure did not raise significant concerns in relation to its being experienced as threatening, distressing, or harmful. This is an important research outcome, as together, the two studies—quantitative and qualitative—assure with some confidence that *My Career Chapter* is not clinically dangerous, and that it may be applied, with due caution, for counselling or research purposes. Although no compelling negative effects upon clients were revealed in this study, it

methodologically contributes to a relatively limited literature on the negative effects of career assessment and counselling (see Whiston & Oliver, 2005) through the specific application of the Client Reactions Systems questionnaire, the Helpful Aspects of Therapy Interview, and searching questions within the semi-structured interview. With this study as a case example (although we make no claim on its generalisability), we argue that new career assessment and counselling procedures should be subject to an investigation of their potential to distress or harm—not just their potential for enjoyment and clinical good.

Implications for Practice and Research

This study provided some evidence of *My Career Chapter*'s utility as a tool for facilitating clients' writing an autobiography in relation to the Systems Theory Framework of career (Patton & McMahon, 2006), which includes proximal and distal interpersonal, social, and societal influences. In addition to affirming the value of written exercises and individual interpretation, this outcome pertains to the finding by Brown and Ryan Krane (2000) that building support within social networks forms an important component of the career counselling experience. Accordingly, clients who have been made more aware of the broader social influences of career may be in a better psychological position to engage in social processes of career development, such as networking under the guidance of the counsellor.

Participants' hearing their stories was a significant highlight for them personally. Whilst these results affirm the value of the reading and hearing procedure of *My Career Chapter*, they also implicate the importance of the client-counsellor working alliance, and the clinical sensitivity required in this approach to career assessment and counselling—which is a crucial process identified by Heppner and Heppner (2003) and other scholars (e.g., Meara & Patton, 1994; Whiston & Oliver, 2005). In accordance with research indicating that the involvement of a counsellor in an intervention significantly adds to its effectiveness (Whiston, Brecheisen, & Stephens, 2003), this study highlights the importance of the co-construction in interpretation and, therefore, the crucial role of the counsellor. Furthermore, the nexus of contemplating-writing-reading-hearing-reflecting being experienced by client-users as effective, gives tentative evidence toward the claim by Heppner and Heppner that career counselling could be conceptualized as a learning process.

Limitations and Future Research

Although there is limited evidence of difference in the outcome of career counselling when gender is considered (Brown & Ryan Krane, 2000; Whiston & Oliver, 2005), the disproportion of gender may be considered a limitation of this research study. However, the current study did not seek to investigate the differences between males' and females' experience of *My Career Chapter*. After all, purposive selection of participants stipulated age, education, and language ability as the primary selection criteria. Nevertheless, the study may be criticized for not fully explicating a gender-balanced view in its recruitment of relatively fewer males. Whilst methodologically such a criticism is unwarranted—with respect to the interpretative phenomenological analysis requirement for purposive selection—it is an enticing prospect to consider that women and men may differ in how they experience the procedure, particularly the expressive phase in the reading and interpretation with a counsellor.

Whilst there is more work to be done to understand the *process* of *My Career Chapter* with respect to clients' and counsellors' experience of it in action (e.g., investigating client and counsellor self-talk), future research should investigate its *outcomes* on empirical criteria (e.g., career-decidedness and confidence) with respect to client change/improvement, and in comparison to related procedures such as the *My System of Career Influences*.

Summary and Conclusion

Given the dearth of empirical studies pertaining to narrative career assessment and counselling procedures, this study makes a contribution to the literature with respect to

evaluating a theoretically-informed narrative procedure in the field, and for gaining an understanding of its process and its short-term impact felt by adult clients. We make no claims on the generalisability of this study and *My Career Chapter*'s applicability to a broad population of clients; indeed there is much research to be done to explore its wider utility and administration. We do claim, however, that in combination with previous research, by using a QAUL+quan research design with qualitative data in combination with supplementary quantitative data, this study provides further evidence that *My Career Chapter* is a career assessment and counselling procedure which is potentially useful and enjoyable for adult clients seeking a narrative exploration experience, and one that may assist in the generation of insightful understanding of career.

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Appendix

Insert Table 3 here

Theory and Practice

Question

What is one application of *My Career Chapter* in career counselling?

Answer

My Career Chapter is a useful tool for the narrative approach to career counselling because: it facilitates a client writing an autobiographical account of his or her career; it takes a comprehensive view of career through the Systems Theory Framework; it engenders dialogue between the counsellor and client, and between the client's own *I-positions* as a dialogical self.

Question

What value does interpretative phenomenological analysis offer for research into narrative career counselling?

Answer

Narrative career counselling holds meaning as central to the counselling process and outcome. As a hermeneutic research method, interpretative phenomenological analysis provides a useful means by which researchers can derive meaning from the talk and text of counselling.

Table 1
Scores for Positive Reactions on the Client Reactions System (N = 7)

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Median</i>	<i>Range</i>	<i>Minimum</i>	<i>Maximum</i>
Understood	6	2	5	7
Supported	7	1	6	7
Hopeful	6	2	5	7
Relief	5	3	4	7
Aware of negative thoughts/behaviours	5	2	4	6
Clear	6	3	4	7
Better self-understanding	6	3	4	7
Awareness of feelings	5	3	4	7
Responsibility	4	4	3	7
Unstuck	4	2	3	5
New perspective	5	4	3	7
Educated	6	4	3	7
New ways to behave	5	4	3	7
Challenged	5	5	2	7

Table 2
Scores for Negative Reactions on the Client Reactions System (N = 7)

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Median</i>	<i>Range</i>	<i>Minimum</i>	<i>Maximum</i>
Scared	2	5	1	6
Worse	2	3	1	4
Stuck	3	4	1	5
Lack of direction	2	4	1	5
Confused	3	5	1	6
Misunderstood	1	1	1	2
No reaction	2	4	1	5

Table 3
Individual scores for Helpful Aspects of Therapy and Client Reactions System

Participant	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Helpfulness	9	8	8	8	8	8	8
Understood	7	6	6	6	5	7	7
Supported	7	7	6	6	6	7	7
Hopeful	7	5	5	7	5	6	7
Relief	7	4	4	4	5	5	7
Aware of negativity	4	5	5	5	6	6	4
Clear	7	4	4	5	6	6	6
Better self-understanding	7	6	5	5	4	6	7
Awareness of feelings	7	6	5	4	5	5	5
Responsibility	7	4	5	3	4	7	4
Unstuck	4	5	5	4	3	5	4
New perspective	7	5	4	5	3	5	5
Educated	7	5	5	3	6	6	6
New ways to behave	7	4	5	3	4	5	5
Challenged	7	5	4	6	2	7	4
Scared	1	1	5	6	2	2	1
Worse	1	1	4	3	2	2	1
Stuck	1	5	3	5	2	3	1
Lack of direction	1	5	2	2	2	2	1
Confused	1	6	2	3	3	2	4
Misunderstood	1	2	2	1	2	1	1
No reaction	1	4	2	1	4	5	1