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Narrative innovation in life design counseling: The case of Ryan

Paulo Cardoso ^{a,*}, Joana R. Silva ^b, Miguel M. Gonçalves ^b, Maria Eduarda Duarte ^c^a Department of Psychology, University of Évora, Portugal^b School of Psychology, University of Minho, Portugal^c Faculty of Psychology, University of Lisbon, Portugal

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ABSTRACT

The main aim of this research is to study the patterns of narrative change in a case of life design counseling (LDC). The innovative moments coding system (IMCS) was used to conduct an intensive analysis of the career counseling sessions. This coding system is grounded in a narrative conception of the self, and suggests that narrative change results from the elaboration and development of narrative exceptions to a client's core problematic self-narrative. The results supports the adequacy of the IMCS to the study of change in career counseling and reveal that the intervention promotes a pattern of change characterized by three types of innovative moments: action, reflection, and protest. The results are discussed taking into account their implications for career counseling theory, research and practice.

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1. Introduction

Life design counseling (LDC; Savickas, 2011) is a meaning-making approach to career intervention. Based on the epistemology of social constructionism, LDC emphasizes the role of narrative thinking for understanding and intervention in the career construction process. From this perspective, career is the macro-narrative regarding an individual's path along the work role throughout their life-span (Savickas, 2013). To support career construction, LDC aims to help clients re-author their narrative identity and project new possibilities for self-construction into their career roles (Duarte, 2011).

This intervention approach is generally organized into three distinct moments, usually corresponding to three sessions. Session one is oriented by the administration of the career construction interview (CCI; Savickas, 2011), a semi-structured interview through which the client introduces him/herself and elaborates upon relevant episodes of his/her life story. The counselor inquires concerning five topics: (1) role models for self-construction; (2) magazines, television shows or websites for manifest interests; (3) favorite story from a book or movie for the script for the next episode; (4) sayings or mottos for advice to self; and (5) early recollections for perspective regarding the present problem or transition.

Session two is dedicated to helping the client provide coherence for the life episodes addressed in the prior session. Through a co-construction process, client and counselor explore possible meanings within the five topics previously addressed, which will predictably enable the client to identify a life theme, thereby yielding coherence and a sense of continuity to the life episodes reported.

In session three, the client formulates realistic career plans built upon his/her recently reorganized narrative identity. In this sense, the process of career construction is integrated into the client's psychosocial functioning at work and will influence other life roles.

In summary, the career problem is conceptualized as a meaning construction problem (Cardoso, 2012), the resolution of which implies the rewriting of life's micro-narratives into a macro-narrative, where career experiences and expectations reinforce the

* Corresponding author at: Departamento de Psicologia, Universidade de Évora, Apartado 94, 7002-554 Lisboa, Portugal. Fax: +351 266 768 077.
 E-mail address: pmsc@uevora.pt (P. Cardoso).

coherence and continuity of life stories. In an attempt to elucidate this developmental process, we conducted a preliminary exploratory study that analyzed the process of change of a client's self-narrative throughout LDC (Cardoso, Silva, Gonçalves, & Duarte, 2014) and investigating the development of novelties (innovative moments) along the counseling process using the innovative moments coding system (IMCS). Previously, we studied a client that underneath his vocational indecision had a self-narrative that was centered on the theme of sadness on the school-to-work transition impasse. In this study, we were guided by the same research question – how do clients reconstruct meanings during the three sessions of LDC? – to analyze a case without a self-narrative saturated in a problematic theme underneath his career problem. Thus, this second study aims to add a new case-study to the previous research, investigating if this same pattern emerges with a different case. In both cases, career counseling involved three 50-minute sessions with a week in between the sessions.

This line of research addresses the need to analyze the processes and mechanisms that lead to effective change in career counseling (Heppner & Heppner, 2002; Whiston & Rahardja, 2008) in general and in the life design framework (Savickas et al., 2009) in particular. In fact, we know that LDC is effective both in individual counseling (Rehuss, Del Corso, Glavin, & Wykes, 2011) and in a group format (Di Fabio & Maree, 2011); however, the processes and mechanisms of change remain unclear.

To address these questions, we conducted an intensive analysis of the LDC process using two methodological tools originally designed to study narrative change throughout the psychotherapeutic process (Gonçalves, Matos, & Santos, 2009; Gonçalves, Ribeiro, Mendes, Matos, & Santos, 2011): (1) the innovative moments coding system (IMCS; Gonçalves, Ribeiro, Mendes et al., 2011) to track narrative innovation and (2) the return to problem coding system (RPCS; Gonçalves, Ribeiro, Stiles, et al., 2011) to track ambivalence.

1.1. Change from the perspective of innovative moments

There is currently a significant body of empirical data suggesting that innovative moments (IMs) – behavioral, cognitive, and/or emotional exceptions to the problem that brought the client to therapy – are involved in therapeutic change across different clinical

Table 1

Examples of innovative moments vis-à-vis a helping others dominant self-narrative underlying career decision-making problem. From Gonçalves et al. (2010). Adapted with permission.

IM type/content	Example
Action	
New coping behaviors facing anticipated or existent obstacles	C: This weekend I was able to talk to my husband about the possibility of leaving my job
Effective resolution of unsolved problem(s)	
Active exploration of solutions	
Restoring autonomy and self-control	
Searching for information about the problem(s)	
Reflection: creating distance from the problem(s)	
Comprehension reconsidering causes of problem(s) and/or awareness of effects	C: I realized that changing my job wouldn't necessarily leave my family in a helpless situation.
New problem(s) formulations	
Adaptive self-instructions and thoughts	
Intention to fight problem(s)' demands, references of self-worth, and/or feelings of well-being	
Reflection: centered on the change	
Therapeutic process: reflecting about the therapeutic process	C: Yes, these sessions have helped me to see my indecision otherwise. That makes me feel good, makes me believe that I will be able to solve the problem
Change process: considering the process and strategies implemented to overcome the problem(s); references of self-worth and/or feelings of well-being (as consequences of change)	
New positions: references to new/emergent identity versions in face of the problem(s)	
Protest: criticizing the problem(s)	
Repositioning oneself toward the problem(s)	C: I've enough of worrying about the others. What about my life, my plans, where do they fit?
Protest: emergence of new positions	
Positions of assertiveness and empowerment	C: Now it's time to fight for myself, of choosing what I feel is the best for me. I also want to be happy, feel fulfilled, just be me.
Reconceptualization	
Always involve two dimensions: (1) description of the shift between two positions (past and present) and (2) the process underlying this transformation	C: Not knowing which direction to take, or which decisions and choices to make to find myself... It made me feel confused, without peace. Now it's different. To know where we are, what we want and the career we want to embrace gives us peace and tranquility.
Performing change	
Generalization into the future and other life dimensions of good outcomes	CC: The implementation of the new career plans is changing your way of living?
Problematic experience as a resource to new situations	
Investment in new projects as a result of the process of change	
Investment in new relationships as a result of the process of change	
Performance of change: new skills	
Reemergence of neglected or forgotten self-versions	C: Yes, yes. I am starting to see that I can't forget about myself, not only at work but also in other dimensions of my own life. Before I just did tried to answer to everybody's needs but now I am making time to do things that I really enjoy, that actually make me feel alive.

problems and intervention approaches (Gonçalves et al., 2012; Matos, Santos, Gonçalves, & Martins, 2009; Mendes et al., 2010; Ribeiro, Bento, Salgado, Stiles, & Gonçalves, 2011).

The IMs model adopts the narrative perspective that human beings construct meaning from the ongoing flow of experiences in the form of self-narratives (Bruner, 1986; McAdams, 1993; Sarbin, 1986; White & Epston, 1990). In this sense, the clients' problematic self-narrative may be described as their usual (although constrained and dysfunctional) way of understanding the world, and IMs may be observed as moments in the therapeutic dialogue when clients challenge this repetitive and redundant self-narrative by introducing a novelty in their way of acting, thinking or behaving (see Gonçalves, Ribeiro, Mendes, et al., 2011).

Hypothesis-testing studies (Gonçalves et al., 2012; Matos et al., 2009; Mendes et al., 2011) and case studies (Alves, Mendes, Gonçalves, & Neimeyer, 2012; Gonçalves, Mendes, Ribeiro, Angus, & Greenberg, 2010; Ribeiro et al., 2011; Santos, Gonçalves, & Matos, 2011; Santos, Gonçalves, Matos, & Salvatore, 2009) suggest that IMs can be reliably identified through the IMCS (Gonçalves, Ribeiro, Mendes, et al., 2011) and that these narrative novelties are consistently associated with good outcome cases. Moreover, these studies have confirmed the categorization of IMs into seven different types (action, reflection I and II, protest I and II, reconceptualization, and performing change). Table 1 contains a description and specific examples of these IMs. The empirical results obtained until now suggest that action, reflection and protest IMs are visible from the early phases of therapy regardless of the therapeutic outcome (Fig. 1). However, these innovations only appear to be translated into sustained development of significant change if reconceptualization emerges consistently from the middle to final phases of therapy. Thus, according to the IM model of change, reconceptualization IMs assume a central role in successful psychotherapy (for a further description on the role of reconceptualization for therapeutic change see Gonçalves, Ribeiro, Mendes, et al., 2011; Mendes et al., 2010). Reconceptualization implies the construction of a contrast between an earlier dominant position and an innovative position (what changed or is changing?), as well as a description of what led to this transformation (why or how change occurred?). Thus, in this type of IM, the client positions him or herself as the author of change, providing a sense of coherence to the other types of IMs (e.g., action and reflection), which are by their nature more elementary and contribute to the construction and shaping of a new self-narrative (Gonçalves & Ribeiro, 2012). The IMs model suggests that IMs have two different levels of elaboration: a low level and a high level (Cunha et al., 2012). Low-level IMs are more elementary and include action, reflection I and protest I. High-level IMs are more elaborated IMs, with a higher potential for change's production and include reflection II and protest II, as well reconceptualization and performing change IMs.

1.2. Ambivalence from the perspective of innovative moments

As we have described, IMs constitute a challenge to the formerly dominant problematic self-narrative. In this sense, it is not uncommon for this process of change to elicit feelings of uncertainty and thus threaten the client's self-stability (Arkowitz & Engle, 2007). In this case, the client will struggle to reinstate his or her internal coherence and self-stability. This self-protection process often emerges in the therapeutic dialogue in the form of a repetitive oscillation between the elaboration of IMs, which temporarily break with the problematic self-narrative, and a return to the problem, which allows the client to reduce the discrepancy created by innovation (Gonçalves, Ribeiro, Stiles, et al., 2011). When this cycle of ambivalence keeps emerging in a frequent and repetitive way throughout therapy, it may be a sign of the client's stuckness.

Previous research (e.g., Gonçalves, Ribeiro, Stiles, et al., 2011; Ribeiro et al., 2014) suggests that this form of ambivalence may be captured through the identification of return to the problem markers (RPMs). RPMs consist of moments in therapy where after the elaboration of an IM, the client gets immediately involved in the reaffirmation of the problematic self-narrative. Similar to what has been found for IMs, empirical data has revealed a different expression and/or pattern of RPMs in good and poor outcome cases. In general terms, in poor outcome cases, these ambivalence markers (a) seem to be more likely to occur across therapy (Gonçalves,

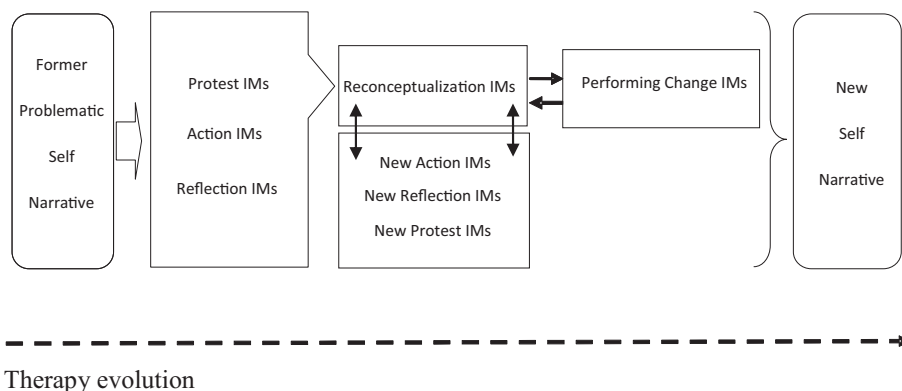


Fig. 1. An heuristic model of change on the perspective of innovative moments. Adapted from Gonçalves et al., 2009, with the permission from the authors.

Ribeiro, Stiles, et al., 2011), (b) reveal a lower expressive decrease throughout the process (Gonçalves, Ribeiro, Stiles, et al., 2011; Ribeiro et al., 2014), or (c) remain significantly higher at the end of the therapeutic process (Ribeiro et al., 2014). Thus, these results make it clear how this oscillatory movement between IMs and the problematic self-narrative may interfere with the therapeutic outcomes and lead to therapeutic stasis.

1.3. Purpose of the present study

The main aim of this research was to study the patterns of narrative innovation and ambivalence in a case of life designing counseling. Thus, the main questions were as follows: how does the client construct meaning and progress throughout the three sessions of LDC, from the perspective of the IMs model of change? Is the pattern of IMs' evolution in this case similar or different from the previous analyzed case (Cardoso et al., 2014), in which a more dominant self-narrative was present?

2. Methods

The present study analyzed the process of narrative change along a LDC case. All of the counseling sessions were coded using the IMCS and the RPCS to track, respectively, the IMs and the RPMs.

2.1. Participant

Ryan was the second client included in a training DVD on LDC (Savickas, 2009). He was a 29-year-old Caucasian man who worked as a carpentry apprentice for two years. Throughout the first session, Ryan elaborated upon several career problems: (1) indecision regarding a career path and the need to find career alternatives compatible with his skills and interests (i.e., "[I am searching for] Just an idea like a path, an idea to just find what I'm compatible with the workforce that's out there for a 29-year-old with, you know, not much experience in like the, you know, work field as far 'cause I was in the Marine Corps for 4 years, and then I got out, and I jumped right into carpentry work"), (2) occupational dissatisfaction (e.g., "I'm not happy in my job") and feelings of anxiety and frustration caused by the work schedule instability (e.g., "you know, up and down with the market, and the economy, and it's you're not always consistent with your work, so I don't know when I'm gonna be going to work. I don't know, you know, what my work schedule is like, and it's really frustrating and stressful"), (3) relational difficulties with the co-workers considering that did not allow him to communicate with other people or express himself (e.g., "I get yelled at for talking to, like the people at the stores that I work at, just 'cause I'm a friendly guy, but that's not my own time"), (4) and legal problems that block entry into the occupations of firefighter and police officer (e.g., "I passed the Chicago firefighter test, and I was 72 on the list, the callback list. And they called me back. I went back, so I took the test, to take the physical agility test, and they I called them up to ask them if I could come in and take it and they said no 'cause of my background").

2.2. Counselor

The counselor is the author and a recognized expert concerning the life designing framework for counseling. This model is grounded in 20 years of theoretical work closely informed by research and practice. Ryan's counseling process integrates a DVD originally developed to illustrate master examples of LDC (Savickas, 2009).

2.3. Researchers

The case was fully and independently coded by two researchers thoroughly trained in the IMCS and the RPCS. The first coder (first author) has been studying the field of vocational psychology and working as a career counselor for the last 20 years. The second coder has a PhD in clinical psychology and in the last few years has been working on psychotherapy research within the Innovative Moments Research Program.

A third coder, a professor of clinical psychology and senior author of the IMCS and the RPCS, worked as a supervisor and third judge throughout the coding process.

2.4. Measures

IMCS (Gonçalves, Ribeiro, Mendes, et al., 2011). Ryan's career counseling process was entirely coded using the IMCS to examine his process of change considering seven different IM types: action, reflection I or II, protest I or II, reconceptualization and performing change (Table 1). Thus, IMs mark every instance in which the client narrates that he is acting, feeling or thinking in a way that clearly contrasts with the problematic issues that brought him to counseling. Illustrations of the different types of IMs tracked in the present case are provided in the results section. This system has proven to be a reliable and systematic tool for identifying IMs. The average percentage of agreement in several studies ranged from 84% to 94% for the presence or absence of IMs, and the average Cohen's Kappa ranged from 0.80 to 0.97 for the types of IMs that were identified by the coders (Gonçalves, Ribeiro, Mendes, et al., 2011).

RPCS (Gonçalves, Ribeiro, Stiles, et al., 2011). Ryan's case was additionally coded with the RPCS to analyze moments of ambivalence throughout the counseling process. This system allows tracking return to the problem markers (RPMs), that is, moments in the client's

discourse when after the elaboration of an IM the client immediately returns to the problematic self-narrative. RPMs are coded only if they emerge in the same speaking turn of the IM (or in the first speaking turn after the therapists' intervention that immediately follows the IM's elaboration). Illustrations of RPMs identified in Ryan's case are presented in the Results section.

2.5. Procedures

Before initiating the coding process, the coders read the transcripts of the entire counseling process to achieve a consensual definition of the problematic self-narrative. Afterward, the transcripts were analyzed, and all narrative passages involving some form of challenge (either in the form of thoughts, feelings or actions) to this previously problematic self-narrative were coded as IMs (e.g., references to self-confidence, positive feelings, assertiveness or the intention to invest in career exploration as a consequence of the change process). Thus, the coders had to decide for every passage of the transcript whether that constituted an IM, and if so, two more decisions had to be made. (1) What were the IM's up and bottom limits? (2) Which type of IM was it? After completing the independent coding, resolving disagreements and reaching a final decision regarding IMs classification, the coders moved on to the identification of RPMs. In this task, the coders independently revisited all IMs and had to decide if a RPM was present or absent.

Each session was coded independently and in sequential order (i.e., Session 1, Session 2, and Session 3) for the presence of each type of IM and the presence of RPMs. The variables used were the proportion of time (in seconds) of different types of IMs (relatively to the global amount of time) per session and also for the entire case and the percentage of IMs with RPMs for each session and for the entire case. Empirical research on IMs has mainly worked with the proportion (termed salience, previously) instead of the frequency of IMs, as this variable is assumed to be a more direct indicator of narrative elaboration (Gonçalves, Ribeiro, Mendes, et al., 2011).

2.6. Training

Before analyzing the case, all coders participated in extensive training in the IMCS and the RPM. This training involved the codification of IMs and RPMs in training workbooks and psychotherapy sessions. Researchers were only assumed to be reliable coders in each system after reaching a Cohen's kappa of .75. Regular meetings with an expert researcher (third author) were held throughout the training process to discuss doubts and obtain supervision feedback.

3. Results

3.1. IMs' reliability

The agreement on IMs versus non-IMs was .75, and the agreement on IMs types was .68. Taking into consideration the complexity of the coding (deciding if a specific part of the session is an IM, where it starts and where it ends, as well as the specific type of IM), the level of agreement was considerable.

3.2. IMs across the counseling process

The IMs occupied 23.9% of the overall duration of the three sessions. The duration of the client's engagement in IMs increased throughout the counseling process: 8.5% in the first session, 28.5% in the second and 34.3% in the last session. The lower duration of the IMs in the first session can be explained by the fact that this session is mainly centered on the problem's definition and on the assessment of career themes. During the second and third sessions, the counselor moved from this assessment and encouraged the client to elaborate a narrative that allowed him to construct a narrative identity and project new possibilities of self-construction in the work role (Savickas, 2013).

3.3. IM types during the counseling process

Fig. 2 presents the salience of each type of IM across the three sessions. The IM type with the highest salience was reflection (20.9%), which was followed by protest (1.8%) and action (1.2%). Action IMs occurred in the first session when the client referred to the past search for solutions to materialize his career plans, either through the participation in a recruiting process (e.g., "I took those tests, passed them all, and did great on all of them") or through his involvement in citizenship role (e.g., "I'm a volunteer... Yeah. I'm with, I do Chicago Cares"). In the second session, action IMs were less expressive (0.5%) but remained related to the search for solutions to his career problems in the past (e.g., "I've got AMT certification. I went to Oakland. Well, it was at Oakland Hospital. It was an AMT course"). In the third session (1.9%), Action IMs evolved to the active and current search for solutions to his career problems (e.g., "I went and saw Kim on one day, and we talked" or "I showed my mom your... my bag of biography... I told her you know I want to get, I want to find something where I'm you know, I told her about the man's man, and you know").

Reflection IMs were the dominant type of narrative innovation in all of the sessions. Ryan's engagement in this type of IM substantially increased from session one (6.3%) to session two (25.2%) and session three (30.8%). In session one, reflection IMs exclusively expressed the client's efforts to create distance from the problematic self-narrative (Reflection I). Most of the time (4.2%), this form of narrative innovation, involved the client's comprehension of the causes and consequences of his problem (e.g., "...I work at night, and I don't see many people. Like I get yelled at for talking to, like the people at the stores that I work at, just 'cause I'm a friendly

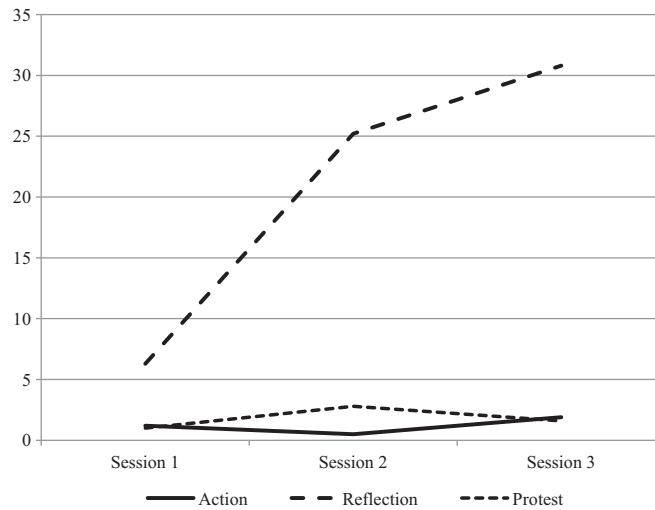


Fig. 2. Evolution of action, reflection and protest innovative moments throughout the career counseling process.

guy...”). However, reflection I IMs also emerged in the form of adaptive thoughts (0.8%) (e.g., “Commitment to excellence, that’s my favorite saying”), intentions to fight problem demands (0.6%) (e.g., “I could narrow it down”), and references to well-being (0.4%) (e.g., “I enjoyed the Marine Corps. That was the best time in my life, the Marine Corps”) and of self-worth (0.3%) (e.g., “I was really a good football player”).

In session two, this IM type continued to be expressed, particularly in the form of intentions to fight the problem (5.3%) (e.g., “Oh, yeah, I can go sign up for a project manager course right now and go to school, 3 nights a week for a year and get the certificate”), deepening the comprehension of the problem’s causes and consequences (4.6%) (e.g., “However, I’ve never tried because I’m afraid to get denied because of my background”) and new problem formulations (2.4%) (e.g., “I’m a little scared because that’s the whole thing. There’s a loophole there’s a loophole like I said. Everyone has a loophole. However, it’s the fear of, you know, going to the trouble and then being disappointed, and that hurts”).

It is worth noticing that the first manifestations of reflection II IMs also emerged during session 2, indicating an evolution from the client’s distancing toward the problem to his engagement into thoughts, feelings, and actions centered on the change. These change-centered IMs proved to be almost exclusively related to the emergence of a new identity (10.8%). The following vignette is an example of this evolution as it illustrates how Ryan was able to integrate his career plans into a multifaceted representation of himself:

Counselor: When you’re here [reference to occupations that integrate the social and the realistic positions of the client], it’s golden. And so that’s why one of the big attractions was the safety forces. You know, the fire-fighting, the police because...
 Ryan: Right. A little bit of both. (Reflection II IM).

In session three, reflection I IM salience increased in comparison with the prior sessions, which thus highlighted the consolidation of Ryan’s transformation. The comprehension of the problem’s causes and consequences (9.9%), the intention to fight the problem, (2.9%) and the reference to feelings of well-being (1.1%) (e.g., “Yup. It’s been great”) once again unfolded as the more frequent manifestations of reflection I IMs. In this session, the salience of reflection II IMs also increased, and the emergence of a new narrative identity (14.8%) and of new solutions/alternative career plans (1.8%) (e.g., “being a project manager. Running, you know, overseeing, you know, a building to be built, so that’s something I’ve looked into”) have earned a clear position.

In summary, throughout the sessions, reflection IMs evolved, fundamentally, from narrative elaborations more focused on the problem comprehension (reflection I) to clear intentions to fight the problem and new problem formulations, culminating in the emergence of a new representation of self (reflection II). In the last session, Ryan’s narrative transformation was illustrated by a wider expression of feelings of well-being and a reference to alternative career plans (reflection II).

Protest IMs revealed a variable salience across sessions. As shown in Fig. 1, from the first to the third session, the salience of this type of IM was of 1%, 2.8% and 1.6%, respectively. In the first session, protest IMs scarcely emerged. At the beginning of the session, the client exhibited a critical position toward his co-workers’ attitudes as illustrated in the following vignette:

Ryan: Right, exactly, and I can’t help it. And then they don’t like when you talk, and it’s like, hey, I get my work done, you know, I do my job. I’ve, you know, I’ve worked my way up fairly quickly (Protest I IM).

At the end of the session, the client elaborated another protest IM when talking about his adolescence and expressing an assertive position toward his family of origin:

Ryan: I want to do my own thing with it, and I’ll be so much, you know, drawn into, you know, his way of doing. I want to do it my way, and my way was fine ‘cause I love playing football (Protest II IM).

In the second session, protest IMs increased their salience up to 2.8%. Throughout the session, protest I IMs (1%) were once again associated with Ryan's critical position toward his co-workers and their attitude toward their family lives:

Ryan: And the way they talk about their family is ridiculous too! Counselor: Yeah, but they don't wanna hear your opinion. Ryan: Nope. They just tell me to shut up. Counselor: They have to go. They don't wanna hear what you think. And you have no chance of emerging as a leader for the next 10 years. So you're a journeyman or... Ryan: Yeah, yeah. Counselor: Yeah. Ryan: Yup, pretty much (Protest I IM).

In this session, protest I IMs displayed a lower salience than protest II IMs (1.8%). Protest II IMs emerged when Ryan was affirming his career plans (e.g., "I don't...I wouldn't want to be a security guard"), expressing critique against his attitude of complain (e.g., "Not just puckering in and, you know, complain about everything all day") or expressing his determination for overcoming the legal problems that may impede the substantiation of his career plans (e.g., "We've got to go through it").

In the third session, the salience of protest IMs was 1.6% of the total session time. In the beginning, there was a protest IM where the client expressed a position of critique toward the problem (reflection I).

Ryan: It's just all over the place, so that's hard to do. And I don't want to cheat myself and say I'm gonna do this, then I'll set myself up for disappointment because I won't do it, because I would have had to work that week, at night, and vice versa. Sometimes I work three nights a weekend then work the other two during the day, and I'm all screwed up! So, it's no, I kind of... I don't have a timeline (Protest I IM).

The remaining protest IMs identified across this session were exclusively of type II, thus revealing the emergence of a new position, when he said that did not want to be unhappy at work with his colleagues (e.g., "I don't want a... I don't want no part of that"), the affirmation of his needs (e.g., "but I want also to be...I wanna be happy for me") and expressed a position of empowerment (e.g., "have to be my own example"). This pattern of evolution from protest I to protest II may be perceived as a marker of the positive evolution of the change process.

3.4. RMPs across the counseling process

The analysis of ambivalence throughout Ryan's change process was conducted through the computation of the percentage of RMPs in each session. In the first session, there were no RMPs. In the second session, these ambivalence markers emerged in 1.9% of the total IMs, and in the third session, 1.8% of the IMs were followed by RMPs. Thus, these results indicate that ambivalence throughout the sessions was substantially low. RMPs were manifested as brief moments of Ryan's disbelief when confronting the barriers that separated him from his career goals (e.g., "Oh, yeah, there are loopholes for everybody [Reflection I]. I just don't have the million dollars" [RPM]) or in the form of guilt toward his passivity in career construction:

Ryan: I like broadcasting. I like communications, things of that nature. I like, always, weather... You know being a weather bug, things of that nature. I have always wanted to work at Columbia University downtown and study art or study communication, something of that nature [Reflection]. However, it's, I've never, I guess it's my fault because I haven't taken that step to doing that [RPM].

4. Discussion

The results of the intensive analysis of Ryan's case allow refinement of the current understanding of the change process in LDC. Narrative innovation emerged throughout the three sessions, either in the form of action, reflection, or protest IMs. These distinct types of narrative novelties appear to have supported the client's evolution from a condition of career indecision to the construction of plans for different career roles. Interestingly, the higher proportion of IMs were reflection IMs, which suggests that a higher level of reflection might be necessary for change to occur.

In the first session, the support to problem definition and the exploration of significant life episodes enabled Ryan to distance himself from the problem and improve his understanding of its causes and consequences (Reflection I). In the second session, these types of IMs kept emerging, which suggests that Ryan continued to be engaged in a process of increasing the understanding of his difficulties. However, in this session, new forms of narrative innovation were also identified, such as intentions to fight the problem (Reflection I) or new identity versions (Reflection II). This evolution might be explained by the characteristics of the second session, where the focus and support dedicated to the identification of a life theme facilitated Ryan's reorganization of his life episodes and, consequently, the re-writing of his narrative identity. Throughout the third session, Ryan's focus on the formulation of realistic career plans, built upon his recent narrative identity reorganization, was expressed in the growing proportion of a position of distance toward the problem (Reflection I) as well as in the growing proportion of thoughts, feelings and actions centered on the change (Reflection II). That is, Ryan's counseling process revealed a progressive increase in the proportion of reflection IMs associated with the emergence of a new identity, problem comprehension, intention to fight the problem and new solutions to address the problem, namely, the elaboration of career plans that integrate the client's different life roles. Furthermore, there appears to be a link between Ryan's comprehension of the problem's causes and consequences and his

intention to fight the problem. The following vignette illustrates this transformation. The client identifies behaviors that prolong the discomfort (problem) and then expresses his intention to fight back:

Ryan: Have a beer and, you know, watch TV. Counselor: And watch the sports and just sit there versus a guy like you, it doesn't make him. Ryan: I gotta move around doing stuff (Reflection I).

As far as action IMs are concerned, we tracked an evolution throughout the process from the client's centration in the active exploration of solutions in the past (client's previous attempts to address the problem) to his reference to the active exploration of solutions in the future (client's exploration of new career plans).

On the other hand, protest IMs evolved from positions of critique in relation to the problem and the other people who support it (type I), to positions of assertiveness, empowerment and repositioning oneself toward the problem (type II).

In short, these results suggest that throughout the counseling process the evolution of Ryan's narrative elaboration was associated with the aims of each session and specifically moved from a focus in structuring the past to an increased engagement in projecting the future. This process has been eloquently described by Savickas (2005) as the transformation of tension into intention and of preoccupation into occupation.

The comparative analysis of the present study with the previous study of Cardoso et al. (2014) improves our understanding of the process of change in LDC. The first aspect to consider is that in both studies, the proportion of innovative conversation increased from session to session. These results are consistent with psychotherapy research data (e.g., Alves et al., 2012; Matos et al., 2009; Mendes et al., 2010) of psychotherapeutic change, in suggesting that small changes, as the ones captured by IMs may, by accumulation, lead to more important changes and to the transformation of the client's self-narrative (Gonçalves & Ribeiro, 2012; Stiles et al., 1990).

The second parallel refers to the considerably high proportion of reflection IMs found in both counseling case studies. We hypothesize that these results may be explained by the specificity of this model of intervention, namely regarding the pre-defined structure and aims of each session. This hypothesis is supported by research suggesting that the proportion of IMs across psychotherapy could also be influenced by the therapeutic tasks. Indeed, research on IMs has revealed that the duration of IMs is higher in emotion focused therapy (EFT) relative to narrative therapy and client-centered therapy (Mendes et al., 2010). These results could be explained by the systematic use of two-chair and empty-chair dialogue therapeutic tasks, which clearly increased the duration of IMs, by sustaining the elaboration of the exceptions that emerged during these tasks (Gonçalves et al., 2010; Gonçalves et al., 2012).

The third aspect worth mentioning is that, in both studies, reflection and protest IMs evolved from the type I to the type II, a similar pattern as described in good outcome cases in psychotherapy (e.g., Mendes et al., 2011). This pattern of change underlines the positive evolution of both cases studied by Cardoso and colleagues and supports the adequacy of the IMCS to the study of change in career counseling.

Finally, although the total proportion of IMs was revealed to be much higher in the present case, in both studies, change was associated with narrative innovation in the form of action, reflection, and protest. These results are consistent with those found in psychotherapy research: repeated cycles of action, reflection and protest are usually the first forms of narrative elaboration that emerge (Gonçalves et al., 2009). However, in good outcome cases of psychotherapy research, these cycles of action, reflection and protest are usually followed by the emergence of reconceptualization IMs by approximately the middle phase of the treatment. Usually, the proportion of this IM type continues to increase, followed by performing change IMs. This was not observed in both counseling cases analyzed by Cardoso and colleagues, as neither reconceptualization nor performing change emerged throughout the process. There are several possible interpretations for this result. First, we speculate that three sessions might not provide sufficient time for the development of reconceptualization and performing change IMs. Perhaps a more intensive and prolonged intervention, supporting the career plans of the clients, might generate reconceptualization IMs. We have suggested in previous publications (Cardoso, 2012; Cardoso et al., 2014) that reconceptualization IMs could be an important ingredient sustaining personal agency and necessary to face the challenges that result from the implementation of the career plans. Another explanation for the absence of reconceptualization could be related to the fact that the intervention did not explore the client's perspective on the process of change. In this sense, a case study showing how LDC facilitated the resolution of career indecision only tracked reconceptualization in the follow-up session, when the client was invited to elaborate upon her change process (Cardoso, 2012). In the same context, research on the role of narrative innovation in everyday life change in adults without psychopathology has demonstrated that reconceptualization IMs were only expressed in the resolution of good outcome participants' problems in the last assessment session, when the participants were invited to talk about their change process (Meira, Gonçalves, Salgado, & Cunha, 2009). A final possibility is that reconceptualization IMs are necessary for the change that occurs in psychotherapy but not for change that occurs in vocational counseling. Perhaps in vocational counseling, change is facilitated by reflection IMs, most likely of subtype II, which could be conceived as precursors of reconceptualization (see Mendes et al., 2011).

Ryan's ambivalence throughout the counseling process was minimal. In the second and third sessions, the percentage of RPMs was of 1.9% and 1.8%, respectively. The low ambivalence toward change contrasts with the proportion found in the study of Cardoso et al. (2014) – 25% RPMs in the second session and 12% RPMs in the third session. Thus, the present case reveals a higher proportion of IMs (particularly the higher-level IMs, that is, type II reflection and protest) and a lower percentage of RPMs. This negative association between higher-level IMs and ambivalence markers has been thoroughly described in psychotherapy research (Gonçalves, Ribeiro, Stiles, et al., 2011). However, and considering that both case studies were reported as successful, one question arises: what may explain the different pattern of IMs and RPMs found across these cases? In the previous case study from Cardoso et al. (2014), the IMCS and the RPCS were applied to a career counseling case with a self-narrative dominated by a single theme, which led us to hypothesize

that career counseling clients with narratives that are more dominant may be more resistant to change. That is, without a clearly dominant position blocking the emergence of narrative innovation, Ryan's self-narrative could be flexible enough to allow change to take place with a reduced level of ambivalence. Several models of psychotherapy change (Prochaska & DiClemente, 1982; Stiles, 2002) suggest that the degree of client's preparedness to change is central in the way change develops. Obviously, clients more prepared to change present lower levels of ambivalence than the ones more hesitant or unprepared to start changing. In these last cases, we expect that the oscillation between the elaboration of IMs and the reaffirmation of the problematic self-narrative will be present in a higher degree, until the ambivalence is somehow resolved. In fact, research in psychotherapy attributes a very high percentage of variance of change to the client, with estimates from ranging from 22% (Wampold, 2001) to 40% (Asay & Lambert, 1999; Lambert, 1992).

This exploratory hypothesis is also supported by research on career counseling suggesting that in cases with a self-narrative with a more saturated single theme, the intervention is generally less effective (Masdonati, Perdrix, Massoudi, & Rossier, 2013), and thus it should be longer (Heppner & Hendricks, 1995) and conducted in the more supportive style of career counseling (Anderson & Niles, 2000; Rochlen, Milburn, & Hill, 2004).

4.1. Limitations

One main limitation of this study is associated with the absence of standardized measures to evaluate the outcome of the career counseling process and the absence of follow-up measures. The assumption of the efficacy of the intervention was based on the client's subjective report at the end of the third session.

Another limitation results from the need to code sessions in a sequential order, which can produce bias due to coders' expectations. In fact, it is not possible to code IMs without considering the context of its occurrence and their emergence in a given time (by definition to code IMs, one need to know what were the rules of the problematic self-narrative, and they change along the process). To reduce the impact of this form of bias, coders are kept unaware of the status of the cases (success or unsuccessful) and also kept unaware of the hypothesis under study. In this particular paper, this was only partially achieved, as only one coder was unaware of both the status and questions that were posed from the onset of the study. However, the degree of agreement between coders and the support of an external auditor reduced the possibility of bias.

4.2. Implications for research

To the best of our knowledge, this is the second study using the IMCS and the RPCS to analyze a client's narrative elaboration in LDC. At this point, more research is needed, both to overcome the limitations inherent to results generalizability in case studies and to achieve the research possibilities of this methodology in the career counseling process. Thus, future research should study narrative innovation in good and poor outcome cases to understand the differences between those clients who are able to benefit from LDC and those who are not. This knowledge will improve our understanding of the change process in LCD, thus benefiting counseling practice and teaching.

The use of IMCS in the study of the change process of clients with different problems and in different moments of their career development could provide us with relevant information on how LDC might be adapted to clients' needs. In this sense, it might be interesting to design a study involving participants with and without a self-narrative saturated by one single theme underlying their career problems. To study this topic, a formal method to access self-narratives flexibility must be used, for example the core conflictual relationship theme (CCRT; Luborsky & Crits-Christoph, 1990; see a study by Batista et al., 2014 that uses the CCRT and the IMCS). This would allow for a deep understanding of the role of the five types of IMs in the construction of realistic plans and specifically whether reconceptualization and performing change might be a necessary cornerstone throughout this process. For what concerns clients in different moments of their career development, this methodology might also be useful for studying teenagers facing major transitions (e.g., school to college and school to work transition) as it would allow for the clarification of the possible levels of narrative elaboration among populations where the construction of an identity is still emerging. Finally, it is important to apply the IMCS to the study of other models of career counseling to allow for an integrative view of the process of change in career counseling.

4.3. Implications for practice

The suggestions here presented should be considered as potential contributions for LDC innovation, in particular, and as potential bridges to overcome the gap between research and practice in the field of career counseling, in general.

Assuming Fig. 1 as a framework to explain the critical processes in LDC, we suggest some counseling techniques that may facilitate the call-up and/or exploration of IMs and, by this, increase the presence of repeated cycles of action, reflection and protest. For example, the elaboration of action IMs might be stimulated in the first session by leading the client to describe the way he or she has been dealing with the career problems thus far. In the second session, this type of IMs might be further stimulated by the client's exploration of career alternatives arising as a consequence of the re-writing of his or her self-narrative in the first session. On the other hand, protest IMs might be prompted through the use of experiential techniques that allow the client's expression of new positions toward the problem. These types of strategies might be particularly of use to clients whose vocational problems have a single more dominant problematic self-narrative. By moving a position previously silenced by the dominant problematic self-narrative to the foreground, these clients will most likely be more open to the elaboration of new possibilities of career construction.

The results from this study further suggest that in good outcome cases, reconceptualization IMs might occur at the end of the last session if the client is invited to elaborate upon his or her change process. As previously discussed, this type of IMs tends to promote the clients' sense of personal agency, which could be crucial to sustaining the implementation of new career plans, particularly regarding clients who have demonstrated higher levels of ambivalence throughout the counseling process. Perhaps the best way to achieve these new and transformative IMs is by having in mind its dual dimension: (1) a contrast between a past problematic self-narrative and a new more adjusted one and (2) the description of the process that allowed this transformation. Recent research with psychotherapy (Fernández-Navarro & Gonçalves, 2014) has suggested that these elements of reconceptualization (contrast and process) are precursors of symptomatic change in the following sessions.

As far as performing change IMs, their emergence might be facilitated in follow-up sessions by exploring the client's implementation of his or her career plans and the impact of these changes across the other dimensions of the client's life. Finally, another major issue is how to address ambivalence in career counseling. The counselor has to be aware of moments in which the IMs' change potential is attenuated, and the primacy of the problematic self-narrative is reemphasized. Research has recently suggested that the preferable strategy to address these moments of ambivalence, in which the IMs are contradicted, trivialized or negated, is to collaboratively accept this ambivalence (Ribeiro et al., 2014). This is also congruent with other perspectives on how to manage ambivalence in psychotherapy, such as motivational interviewing (Miller & Rollnick, 2002).

The integration into LDC of practices grounded in the innovative moments' framework raises some challenges that the training of future counselors should address. From our point of view, the main challenge is to prepare counselors to monitor the client's process of change and act according to client's specific needs. In this context, the training must help the counselors to frame the change of vocational behavior into the broader matrix of human change as well to help counselors be sensitive to how clients evolve from problem comprehension to the emergence of a new self-representation. This type of work implies that the counselor will have to develop some basic skills for adequately relating and communicating with his or her clients (e.g., active listening, empathy, and positive regard), as these competencies are central for change to take place. However, specific skills are also needed. In that sense, the innovative moments' framework (Gonçalves et al., 2009) is useful for training counselors to use innovative moments both as markers of change evolution and as markers to promote change within the possibilities of client's stage of evolution, as illustrated above when we suggested counseling techniques that may facilitate the exploration of IMs.

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