Career Counselling for Emerging Adults Based on Goal-Directed Action: An Innovative Approach to Theory, Research, and Practice

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Abstract In this chapter, we discuss the ways in which Contextual Action Theory can be used to understand career development during emerging adulthood, and to address career concerns that commonly arise during this phase of life. After providing a brief introduction the theory, we describe career development processes that are central to emerging adulthood, focusing on exploration and initial engagement with the world of work, identity formation, and changes and characteristics of emerging adults' social relationships. We then describe existing studies that have applied Contextual Action Theory to understanding these developmental processes. Finally, we delineate an approach to career counselling that is grounded within Contextual Action Theory, focusing on the central tasks of this career counselling model, as well as novel interventions that can be used to address emerging adults' career concerns and to facilitate their broader transition to adulthood.

Keywords Contextual action theory · Action project method · Emerging adulthood · Young adult · Career development · Career counselling

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Although the concept remains contested in the scholarly literature, there is a growing body of research suggesting the existence of a distinct developmental period occurring between adolescence and full adulthood, known as emerging adulthood (Arnett,

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2000, 2004, 2016). As Arnett explains, emerging adulthood is a time of transition in many aspects of young people's lives as they shift from adolescent attitudes, roles and responsibilities, to full adulthood. It is also a pivotal time of life for providing career-related support and counselling, assisting people undergoing a multitude of transitions with formulating goals and plans for their future life, and with achieving those goals and plans. In light of this opportunity, in this chapter we discuss an innovative approach to career counselling for emerging adults.

Chapter Goals

In writing this chapter, we have two primary goals. First, we hope to provide the reader with a broad understanding of one specific approach to understanding and researching career development during emerging adulthood: Contextual Action Theory (CAT). Second, we intend to demonstrate how that approach can be applied in the context of working with career concerns that are prevalent during emerging adulthood.

Chapter Structure

We set the stage for our discussion by providing a brief introduction to CAT, a framework for understanding human experience through the lens of goal-directed action, and by highlighting three central developmental processes of emerging adulthood that are salient to career counselling with this population. We proceed to introduce the research methodology that has grown out of the theory, and discuss the existing body of research examining the process of transitioning to adulthood using the framework of CAT. Finally, we present an emerging model of career counselling for this population, grounded in both the propositions of the theory, and the growing research evidence about the contextual, goal-directed, action-oriented nature of career development in emerging adulthood.

Introduction to Contextual Action Theory

Although goal-directed action has most often been conceptualized in the field as an outcome or consequence of counselling, we argue that it is also central to the process of counselling (Young, Domene, & Valach, 2015). In making this argument, we draw on von Cranach, Ochsenbein, and Valach's (1986) conceptualization of human action as intentional, conscious (though not always rational) behaviour that is influenced by and influences one's social context. Building on this definition of action, we have proposed a specific theoretical framework for understanding action as it relates to human development across life domains, including the domain of work:

CAT. CAT has been described in greater detail in Chap. A Contextual Action Theory of Career of this volume and elsewhere (Valach, Young, & Lynam, 2002; Young & Domene, 2018; Young et al., 2010). However, an overview of key tenets within the theory will facilitate our discussion of how emerging adults' career concerns can be conceptualized from a CAT perspective. The theory also recognizes that, in daily life, people typically engage in actions with others; that is, family members, friends, co-workers, and counsellors, rather than in isolation. Therefore, CAT researchers and practitioners tend to focus on joint actions; that is, actions involving multiple individuals working together. By emphasizing joint action, CAT connects people's goals to their social context.

As we describe in previous works (Valach et al., 2002; Young & Domene, 2018; Young et al., 2010), CAT proposes that action is organized according to varying degrees of complexity. At its simplest, action is organized in terms of elements, which are the basic behavioural units involved in an action and include such things as asking questions, providing explanations, and expressing disagreement within a counselling session. Action is also organized in terms of somewhat more complex functional steps, which are a series of elements that, together, are intended to achieve a goal. For example, as part of the goal of excelling in a job interview, a job applicant may engage in steps such as studying a company's mission/vision statement, researching the company online, and practice answering questions with a friend. The goals towards which actions are directed form the most complex way in which action is understood to be organized within CAT. Goals are the intentions or purposes that drive people's actions. Simultaneously, goals also provide actions with meaning, and link specific actions with the broader social context. Examples of goals that might emerge out of an initial career counselling session might include helping a young person to better understand themselves and the world of work, or achieving a successful transition from school into full-time, long-term employment.

In conjunction with this framework for action organization, we have proposed the existence of three simultaneously present perspectives for understanding action (Valach et al., 2002; Young & Domene, 2018; Young et al., 2010). Action can be perceived in terms of people's externally observable behaviors, their manifest behavior. However, within CAT, action encompasses more than behavior alone. A second perspective from which action can be perceived is internal processes; that is, the cognitions and emotions that accompany manifest behavior when people engage in action, and serve to steer and regulate that action. Finally, action can also be perceived in terms of social context, which encompasses the meanings of actions that emerge when people explain or interpret those actions to others. To fully understand an action, it is important to consider not only the external behavior, but also the mental and social aspects of that action.

It is also important to consider the time-frame over which goals can be achieved, which in CAT is represented in the interconnected concepts of action, project, and career (Valach et al., 2002; Young & Domene, 2018; Young et al., 2010). "Action" is defined as occurring within a span of seconds, minutes or hours. Thus, the kinds of goals that can be achieved with a single action are short-term in nature. To address goal-directed actions over a somewhat longer time-period, the theory proposes the

concept of a "project". Projects occur when actions directed towards achieving a particular goal take place over days, weeks, or months. Most of the goals that clients and career counsellors work on together fall within the time-frame of projects. However, CAT also recognizes that some goals have no pre-defined end point, but instead are pursued over the course of years or even a lifetime. The theory uses the concept of "career" to describe these long-term goals. Importantly, this definition of career encompasses long-term goals in any area of life, not just goals related to work or employment.

Career-Related Developmental Processes of Emerging Adulthood

In their discussion of career counselling with emerging adults, Domene, Landine, and Stewart (2015a) identify three central developmental processes that are likely to be salient to career counselling with this population. Specifically, they describe emerging adults' (a) educational and occupational exploration and initial engagement; (b) identity formation and its implications for work; and (c) experience of change in their close social relationships. These developmental processes are important for career counsellors to understand in order to work with this population, and can be understood from the framework of goal-directed action (Young et al., 2011).

Exploration and Initial Engagement

In industrialized societies with extended periods of emerging adulthood, this is the period of life where people consider different possibilities for their future work and pursue career goals through education, and initial entry into the workforce. However, there is substantial variability in how this process of exploration and initial engagement unfolds for different individuals. Domene et al. (2015a) noted that, although some emerging adults successfully engage in career exploration, complete their education and transition smoothly into the workforce, this ideal progression is only one of the career development trajectories that can occur. Other emerging adults may remain uncertain in their career choice well into emerging adulthood (Arnett, 2004; Konstam & Lehmann, 2011), complete their career exploration but struggle with completing the educational requirements of their chosen occupation (Courtney & Hook, 2016; Mortimer, Zimmer-Gembeck, Holmes, & Shanahan, 2002), or know what occupation they wish to enter and successfully complete their education, but then experience substantial difficulty in making the transition into full-time, long-term employment (Blustein, Olle, Connors-Kellgren, & Diamonti, 2016; Frank, Frenette, & Morissette, 2015). In the 21st Century, increasing numbers of emerging adults have found themselves unemployed or underemployed after leaving school,

to the point that the label "NEET" (not in education, employment or training) has become part of the lexicon of our profession.

The problems that many emerging adults experience with their initial exploration and engagement with the labour market can have deleterious effects on many aspects of these individuals' lives. The most direct is that, without employment as a means to generate income, these young people are at increased risk of poverty or reliance on government assistance. Indirectly, problems with completing the exploration and initial engagement process also hinder individuals' transition to independent living, or lead to multiple unsuccessful attempts to leave the family home (Arundel & Ronald, 2016; Horowitz & Bromnick, 2007). Difficulties that emerging adults experience with this developmental process have also been associated with negative psychological outcomes, including decreased sense of well-being and increased symptoms of anxiety and depression (Domene, Arim, & Law, 2017; Keller, Samuel, Bergman, & Semmer, 2014; Symonds, Dietrich, Chow, & Salmela-Aro, 2016). Conversely, the process of exploration and initial engagement can be supported by key members of emerging adults' social contexts, such as their parents and romantic partners (Young et al., 2011).

Identity Formation

The process of forming a clear identity is a central task of transitioning from adolescence to adulthood (Arnett, 2004; Boardman, 2017; Petersen, Marcia, & Carpendale, 2004) and, consequently, is particularly salient for emerging adults. As Petersen and colleagues (2004) explained, identity can be conceptualized as a personality process that develops over time and is experienced as "feelings of both continuity and discontinuity with one's past that give meaningfulness to one's present and a direction to one's future" (p. 114). From this explanation, it is evident that identity formation and career development are intertwined in substantive ways. Indeed, the development of a vocational or professional identity is a central part of the identity formation process across many cultures (Porfeli, Lee, Vondracek, & Weigold, 2011). In addition, this vocational/career identity formation process may be connected to the previously described educational/occupational exploration and engagement processes, although these connections have not been well studied (Grosemans, Hannes, Neyens, & Kyndt, 2018). Regardless of the nature of the connection, a more established sense of identity is associated with positive career development outcomes (Domene et al., 2015a).

Social Relationships

Emerging adulthood is characterized by numerous changes in the nature of young people's social relationships (Domene et al., 2015a). One such change occurs in emerging adults' relationships with their parents, which typically involves emerg-

ing adults becoming more functionally and psychologically independent over time, as they learn to interact with their parents as adults rather than as children (Booth, Brown, Landale, Manning, & McHale, 2012). There is a growing body of research indicating that parents influence their children's career development into emerging adulthood (Shulman, et al., 2015; Whiston & Keller, 2004), particularly in families from cultures with family-centered values (Fisher & Padmawidjaja, 1999; Mao, 2017). Nonetheless, as the nature of individuals' relationships with their parents change through emerging adulthood, it is likely that the ways in which parents influence and work with those individuals in the pursuit of their career-related goals also changes. Consequently, attending to the changing relationships between an emerging adult client and his or her parents may be important in career counselling with that individual.

Another characteristic of social relationships in emerging adulthood is the establishment of longer-term romantic relationships (Domene et al., 2015a; Young et al., 2011). These relationships tend to be more exclusive, intimate, and committed than romantic relationships at earlier stages of life, but at the same time more varied and featuring a wider range of patterns of relationships engagement than later in life (Arnett, 2004; Shulman & Connolly, 2016). Moreover, these longer-term romantic relationships are connected to career development in several important ways during emerging adulthood: (a) progression in one tends to be associated with progression in the other, while problems in one area can spill over into the other; (b) romantic relationships have been found to be a meaningful source of support and direction during the transition to work; and (c) many emerging adults experience concerns about work-life balance, more specifically, the balance between work and relationship goals.

Relationships with non-romantic peers and friends also change during emerging adulthood (Domene et al., 2015a). For many individuals, friendship networks expand as they enter into post-secondary institutions, and enter more fully into the world of work (Arnett, 2015). These peers can serve as an important source of information, emotional and instrumental support. For example, Young et al. (2015) found that emerging adults and their friends pursue goals together, related to such things as maintaining their friendships in the midst of change; constructing their past, present, and future identities; and engaging in exploration related to their future education and occupation. Similarly, Young, Marshall, and Murray (2017) described numerous characteristics of future-oriented conversations that emerging adult friends have with each other, suggesting that peer relationships can be important in young people's planning for and problem-solving around their future careers.

The existing literature indicates that the changes in people's significant social relationships during emerging adulthood have important implications for their career development. Moreover, as we discuss in the subsequent section, research conducted within a CAT framework reveals that emerging adults engage in joint actions with both parents and romantic partners to pursue goals related to their future careers.

Applying Contextual Action Theory to Researching Emerging Adult Career Development

A growing body of research has explored these and other developmental processes of emerging adulthood from the perspective of CAT. These studies share a common methodology, the Action-Project Method (APM), which was developed specifically to explore goal-directed action in terms of the organization and perspectives of action proposed by CAT (Young, Valach, & Domene, 2005). Moreover, we have argued that APM is particularly well suited for studying developmental processes during emerging adulthood (Wall et al., 2016), in part due to the capacity of the method to access both internal processes, including identity formation processes, and the social contexts of human development. We believe that an explanation of this method is beneficial for understanding the existing body of CAT research on emerging adulthood career development.

Defining Characteristics of the Action-Project Method

The APM is a systematic, naturalistic qualitative method for exploring goal-directed joint action in daily life. It combines a constructivist epistemology with a relativist ontology that derives directly from the propositions of CAT (Domene & Young, 2008; Young & Valach, 2004; Young, Valach, & Collin, 1996). The research method has developed alongside CAT, and includes variants addressing longitudinal research questions (Wall et al., 2016), dyadic and family-wide interactions (Marshall, Zaidman-Zait, Domene, & Young, 2012), systematic qualitative comparisons (Domene & Young, 2008) and sample sizes that range from a few cases to 20 or 30 dyads. Despite the existence of these variations, there are four defining characteristics of the APM.

The first defining characteristic is that the unit of analysis in the APM is action, rather than underlying psychological traits (Young et al., 1996, 2005). The APM was developed to systematically assess and explore joint actions, projects, and career occurring between two or more individuals. This dyadic and family focus is a second defining characteristic of the method (Marshall et al., 2012, Young et al., 2005). In combination, these two characteristics lead to the method being particularly well suited for exploring processes (e.g., counselling process, the process of transitioning to adulthood) rather than outcomes, as well as for exploring action as it occurs in daily life (i.e., action within social context).

Thirdly, the APM is also defined by a distinct set of data collection procedures designed to capture all three perspectives of action proposed by CAT (Wall et al., 2016; Young et al., 2005). Specifically, data collection includes (a) direct, video-recorded observation of pairs/groups of participants' *manifest behavior* in a conversation with each other; (b) a "self-confrontation procedure," in which participants review the video-recording to facilitate reflection about the *internal processes* accom-

panying their manifest behavior; and (c) the construction of *social meaning* between pairs/groups of participants (during the conversation), and between participants and researchers (during the self-confrontation).

Finally, the APM is defined by the characteristics of its data analysis process, in which "discussion to reach consensus while incorporating multiple sources of information forms the heart of the analysis process" (Domene & Young, 2008, p. 62). APM data analysis is always carried out by multiple researchers inductively examining the data sources, and discussing possible interpretations together to reach agreement regarding the most appropriate interpretation. This inductive examination and discussion is informed by the content of the data, the levels of action organization theorized by CAT (i.e., elements, functional steps, goals/intentions), and the researchers' pre-existing knowledge of the phenomenon being studied. The quality of the analysis process is also supported by a range of procedures to promote rigour and trustworthiness, which are described in Domene and Young (2008) and Young et al. (2005).

CAT Research on Emerging Adult Career Development

The existing body of CAT research on the career development of emerging adults needs to be understood not only in terms of the procedures of the APM, but also in the context of the modern world and the challenges it presents for career. Parada and Young (2013) contend that young people who are currently transitioning to adulthood, including entering the workforce, are facing a much different context than previous generations. They are becoming adults in circumstances that have not been experienced before; circumstances that reflect substantial changes in society. For example, among many authors who have addressed this issue, Bauman (2001) spoke of the "inherently dynamic aspects of modernity" (p. 67), and Sennett (1998) used the term "flexible capitalism" to account for changes in the work in Western societies such that a sense of identity and security can no longer be expected, as they were formerly. Similarly, the impact of technological change and the digital economy on the world of work has been characterized by some as a "fourth industrial revolution" (Caruso, 2018, p. 379). These issues of complexity and change are incorporated in CAT through the acknowledgement of the dynamic, and multidimensional nature of human action.

It is in this context that, with our colleagues, we have conducted a range of studies exploring aspects of emerging adult career development, some of which has been framed within the larger issue of transition to adulthood. To elaborate, we were interested in the goal-directed actions and projects of young people as they engaged in this period of transition to adulthood, including but not limited to the transition to work. At the same time, we did not want to direct or limit a priori what actions research participants would engage in relative to their transition. In each of the studies described below, participants were recruited because they identified aspects of the

transition to adulthood to be of interest or concern. This research was also conducted within the theoretical framework of CAT and utilized the APM, described above.

Counsellor-client dyads. To address the question of how counsellors and emerging adult clients jointly construct and engage in goal-directed projects pertinent to the transition to adulthood, we examined the counselling that occurred between professional counsellors and youth who sought assistance with their transition to adulthood (Young et al., 2011). Twelve counselling dyads, involving 37 counselling session were examined using the APM. The primary projects that emerged from this study were building relationships, and identity formation. Identity is the larger framework in which career was situated in these projects. Educational and vocational issues were the starting point of many of the counselling relationships. It is particularly important that the counsellor was able to provide the relational context in which this goal-directed behavior was realized.

Friends. The question of how emerging adults construct the transition to adulthood as goal-directed projects jointly with friends, was addressed in a subsequent study (Young et al., 2015). Fifteen young adult friendship dyads were studied over a 9-month period, using videotaped conversations, the self-confrontation procedure, and telephone monitoring. Their joint projects were grouped broadly as negotiating and maintaining friendship, constructing identity, and promoting career. These projects allowed participants to be intimate and reciprocal with each other, provide support, share emotion, and exercise judgement. The findings illustrate the crucial role relationships play in the construction of identity, and its connection to educational and occupational goals during emerging adulthood.

Romantic partners. In a study focusing on how couples who self-identified as being in a committed relationship take action toward future work and life together, 18 young adult dyads provided data regarding their joint projects over a 6-8-month period. The joint projects that emerged in this study were explicitly about pursing educational and work futures and balancing priorities and their future lives together, with different couples taking a variety of different goal-directed actions in pursuit of those projects (Domene et al., 2012). This study confirmed career development as a joint project with high priority for committed couples in emerging adulthood. Indeed, the authors concluded the career development of the young adults in these relationships belonged to both parties.

Families. The contextualized and dynamic nature of joint, goal directed actions and projects in the career development of emerging adults was evident when examining these processes in Saudi Arabia (the preceding studies described in this section were carried out in Canada). Khalifa, Alnuaim, Young, Marshall, and Popadiuk (2018) investigated the joint transition to adulthood projects of 14 parent-emerging adult dyads in Saudi Arabia. Three kinds of joint projects emerged: (a) negotiating educational and career futures, (b) promoting gender roles and marriage, and (c) shaping independence. However, these projects were part of a higher level goal that represented the context in which they were embedded. Specifically, the researchers identified this higher level goal as crafting generational change and continuity. The projects that these young people engaged in with their parents manifested "tensions between the desire to preserve traditions and local identities, and new ways for youth

to engage in adult work and marriage" (Khalifa et al., 2018, p. 146). Moreover, these tensions were not only between the emerging adult negotiating for change while the parent sought continuity, but between these individuals and society as a whole.

Emerging adults with developmental disabilities. Two studies have been undertaken to address emerging adults transitioning from secondary school to the world of further education, work, or non-work in the context of developmental disabilities. Marshall and colleagues (Marshall et al. 2018) revealed that both relationship and planning-for-the-future goals were present in all the parent-youth projects in this study. Importantly from a career perspective, planning for future was a distinct, and essential part of these projects. These projects addressed internal resources (i.e., emotional regulation in the face of changes) and external resources (i.e., availability of and information about post-high school training opportunities). The adults in these projects also signaled a degree of self-determination by expressing desires, withholding information, and directing the conversation in some instances.

Parents and other familial caregivers also engaged in joint projects between themselves relative to the transition of individuals with developmental disabilities (Young et al., 2018). These projects were broadly identified as equipping the emerging adult for adult life, connecting for personal support, and managing day-to-day while planning for the future. For example, equipping the young person for life as an adult included employment equipping projects such as finding training programs, or job opportunities. Other parents were challenged by the current situation such that their projects revolved around managing the day-to-day challenges of their son or daughter making this transition. For these families, planning for the future, both the young person's and their own, was a secondary issue.

A Contextual Action Theory Approach to Career Counselling

Career counselling can be conceptualized as goal-directed action occurring between clients and counsellors, where the focus is on the actions and goals of clients related to their future life and work. Thus, CAT can be a particularly relevant framework for career counselling practice. It informs career counselling in three specific ways, which are described in the remainder of this chapter. First, it provides a broad framework for understanding processes within counselling, as well as processes that clients participate in their own lives, irrespective of the counselling approach or career theory that the practitioner follows. Secondly, we have identified five broad, process steps to be used with CAT in counselling. Finally, the specific method we have used in our research, that is, the APM, also has applications to counselling. Each of these represents a way of applying CAT in career counselling to emerging adults.

Taking a Goal-Directed Perspective

First, as we have explained, people understand their own and others behavior as goal-directed. Whether or not career counsellors follow an explicit goal-directed theoretical orientation, they can readily understand that counselling is a goal-directed activity with its own a series of goals and sub-goals. Moreover, the joint action between counsellor and client suggests that their joint goals are negotiated, often tacitly. In addition, most clients want to change something about themselves and their lives as they move forward, often framed as reaching for or achieving some anticipated state. Both the goals within counselling and client goals in their lives outside of counselling are reflected in what the client and counsellor are doing. Both client and counsellor are acting in light of these goals. It is likely that some of these goals are obvious to both the counsellor and client, others may be less discernable, and different goals may be implicitly assumed by each party. Indeed, one of the helpful aspects of counselling is to facilitate making these goals more apparent and understandable. However, even when goals are made explicit, there may be a tendency—tacit or otherwise—on the parts of both counsellor and client to explain, understand, or justify them in terms of past, seemingly causal factors. Indeed, the counsellor may want to help the client address these factors to facilitate the realization of future goals.

Taking the perspective of CAT in counselling allows the counsellor to shift away from looking at the client's career situation as being primarily caused by the past, and allows the counsellor to focus on how the client is navigating the future in the context of their life history. This view has been referred to as prospection; that is, constructing, encoding, and remembering the future (Gilbert & Wilson, 2007; Seligman, Railton, Baumeister, & Sripada, 2013). Addressing future behavior in a goal-directed manner is often the implicit or explicit content of career counselling with emerging adults.

This orientation to the future has been explored in cognitive psychology (Stewart, Gapenne, & DiPaolo, 2010) and includes reference to cognitive systems and motor processes. Seligman and colleagues (2013) maintain that prospection is a central organizing feature of perception, cognition, affect, memory, motivation, and action. Others have identified the neurological basis for the organization of goal-directed actions (e.g., Rizzolatti, Cattaneo, Fabbri-Destro, & Rozzi, 2014). Consistent with several other contemporary theories of career development (Arthur & McMahon, 2018), CAT's emphasis on goal-directed action represents a considerable departure from the relatively stable personality or vocational interests that served as the primary focus of career counselling in much of the 20th century. Implementing this approach not only requires counsellors to be attuned to the client's orientation to the future, but importantly, how the client's actions and projects in the present are related to the future.

The Major Counselling Tasks

Taking a goal-directed perspective in career counselling can be augmented considerably by the five major counselling tasks that are informed by CAT (Domene & Young, 2019; Domene, Valach, & Young, 2015b; Young & Valach, 2016; Young, Valach, & Domene, 2015). These tasks overlap with many other approaches to career counselling, but nevertheless are important to review here. First, we recognize that the overall counselling process is to create and maintain a working alliance with the client. The second task is to link what the client is discussing in counselling to their daily life. The third task is to assist the client identify systems and levels of actions, projects, and career. The fourth task is to deal with emotions. Finally, the counsellor and client have to address suboptimal, actions, projects and career. These tasks are not listed here in a sequential order; instead, they permeate counselling.

Engaging in a working alliance. The notion of the working alliance in counselling encapsulates much of what has been said heretofore in this chapter. The working alliance is the joint action of the client and counsellor. Moreover, it is the joint action through which and because of which other actions occur. The counsellor and client join each other to articulate certain goals and to work together to reach them. The working alliance involves attentiveness and empathy on the part of the counsellor and the client, directly and immediately experienced by both. Each brings to the counselling relationship their own cultural and interpersonal skills and attitudes. Each also actively negotiate their joining; their working alliance. We understand the working alliance to be at the core of effective CAT-informed career counselling.

Linking to daily life. Narrative is the means through which clients can provide a link between their present, past and future actions and the counselling process. Narrative refers to facilitating the client's telling of an extensive story about their life. The process of narrative construction in career counselling engages the counsellor as the facilitator of its telling: to be aware of emotion and identity issues, but not to use it as a data gathering source. Within CAT-informed career counselling, narratives are invariably constructed around goals, both in the telling and the told. They provide the basis for continuity from the past to the present, and from the past and the present to the future in the client's life. Narratives can provide counsellors with insight into a client's life, and the people, places, and other life contexts that are important to them. As a function of gaining this greater comprehension through listening to a client's narrative, the importance of different client goals may be better understood.

Identifying actions and projects. In this chapter and elsewhere, we have presented the details of our understanding of action by identifying the systems of action, that is, actions, projects and career, and the levels of action, that is, goals, functional steps, and elements. This framework for understanding the complexity of action can be used directly in the counselling process. Specifically, the counsellor may be able to assist the client to identify either systems of action, or levels of action that are highlighted or challenged in both their narrative and the counselling process. The purpose is not diagnostic; it is to assist the client in identifying specific aspects of goal-directed actions that are strengths, and those that are challenges.

Attending to emotion. Some practitioners may believe that emotion has a less prominent place in the career counselling of emerging adults than in other counselling domains, or with clients at other life stages. CAT holds that emotion is both a critical motivating factor, and an important outcome of action. This is even more the case when actions across time are constructed as projects and careers. Therefore, it is important that career counsellors recognize and address emotion. The narrative, described earlier, is one place where the connection between emotion and action is evident. It can point to the specific emotions that are at play in the client's past actions. The emotions evident in past actions, may be emotions that energize or impede current career-related actions and projects. Thus, addressing them in counselling is vital. Similarly, how emotions are expressed in the ways clients represent their prospective thinking may be indicative of their motivation for future actions or the expected outcomes of them. That is, the more emotionally invested a client is in their goals for the future, the higher the likelihood of that client taking actions in their lives outside of counselling, towards achieving that goal.

Addressing sub-optimal actions, projects, and careers. Career counselling with emerging adults is often about the client's future, to what the client aspires to be, and the steps needed to realize that future. At the same time, present or past projects that are sub-optimal may interfere directly with the realization of that future. To be effective, career counselling should include a focus on working through, modifying, or changing sub-optimal actions and projects. In fact, it is common for clients to seek counselling specifically because they are engaged in sub-optimal projects. For some emerging adults, to seek counselling about their future is the acceptable way for them to address larger, more troubling projects in which they are engaged. Space in the counselling process has to be provided for the narrative about a detrimental project to emerge. Recognizing the connections between the client's sub-optimal, and optimal projects is one means of addressing this issue. Another is to recognize the strengths within detrimental projects that the client may use for optimal projects they are pursuing. Identifying these strengths, even within a problematic project, can work to empower clients and offer them new perspectives and more functional internal processing; for example, beliefs about themselves, in the career counselling process.

Specific Strategies

Several specific counselling strategies have arisen from our use of the action-project research method described in this chapter. These include the use of the self-confrontation procedure, and the action-project procedure as an intervention, which includes several aspects that can be used separately in counselling.

The self-confrontation procedure. When used in clinical practice, the self-confrontation procedure refers to the playing back of the video recording of a counselling interaction with the client, immediately or very soon after the session itself is completed (Popadiuk, Young, & Valach, 2008; Valach, Michel, Dey, & Young,

2002; Young, Valach, Dillabough, Dover, & Matthes, 1994). Briefly, in this proce-
dure, the video of a 10–15 min segment of the counselling session is reviewed by
the client and counsellor. The video is stopped at one-two minute intervals, at the
completion of a meaning unit. The client then has the opportunity to respond to the
counsellor's question, "What were you thinking and feeling at the moment of the
conversation?" The purpose of the self-confrontation procedure is assist the client
to identify cognitions, and affect that they may have experienced during the session.
Any part of a career counselling session in which the client is providing a narra-
tive is particularly appropriate for a subsequent self-confrontation procedure. In this
case, it would allow the narrative to be provided in the session without extensive
counsellor interruption. Our use of the self-confrontation procedure has provided
clients with the opportunity to articulate thoughts and feelings they may have had
during the session which were not expressed at that time. It also can give clients a
greater sense of agency as developers of the narrative, and, by extension, of their
lives. It reinforces the value of being able to tell their story and providing connection
of actions across time, that is, in constructing their projects and careers. For some
clients, this facilitates a shift from an external to an internal locus of control. Although
existing use of the self-confrontation procedure in counselling has not focused on
emerging adult career concerns, we anticipate that the same principles that make the
self-confrontation procedure useful in other counselling contexts will apply to career
counselling with emerging adult clients.

The APM as an intervention. We are currently in the process of adapting, and
researching the APM for counselling practice with emerging adults. Specifically, all
the parts of the APM are being used as a novel supportive intervention for young
people who are newcomers to Canada making both the transition to adulthood, and
the transition to a new country. The intervention is intended to assist these emerging
adults to identify, and engage in their goal-directed projects pertinent to educational,
occupational, and other life tasks. Within CAT, human behaviour is goal-directed,
and can be supported and enhanced from this perspective. Therefore, this supportive
intervention focuses on, but is not limited to, the transition-related, joint goal-directed
actions and projects that young adult newcomers undertake, pertinent to the transition
to adulthood. As with the APM as a research method, this supportive intervention
focuses on a pertinent joint project between the young person and another significant
person in their social environment, for example, colleagues from work or school,
family members, friends, immigrant support workers, romantic partners, roommates,
and teachers.

Our novel supportive intervention is based on facilitating the goal-directed projects
of emerging adults by helping them identify their projects with significant others in
their social context related to career, employment, education, and other life roles over
two session. The project is then supported through the counsellor's telephone moni-
toring for a period of three months. The innovative aspects of this support program
include identifying and working with the significant other person, engaging in joint
conversations that are observed and contribute to the identification of the dyad's joint
project, and the identification of ways in which the project can be enhanced. In addi-
tion, part of the intervention allows the clients to participate in the self-confrontation

procedure that enhances the goals identified above. Preliminary evidence emerging from research we are currently conducting on this intervention suggests that some clients find this short-term intervention to be beneficial in supporting their transition into adulthood and into a new country (Silva et al., 2018).

Conclusion

Elsewhere, Young and Domene (2012) have proposed a research agenda for career counselling, including with emerging adults, based on CAT and the APM. Specifically, we have argued that focusing on actions, and the longer-term and more complex projects and career, researchers can address aspects that are particularly important in career counselling, and career processes generally. These include emotion (see Young, Paseluikho, & Valach, 1997); attention and language (see Young & Valach, 2016); narrative, unconscious processes (see Dyer et al., 2010); as well as relational and cultural contexts (see Young et al., 2011). We hope that the arguments and evidence presented in this chapter have demonstrated that CAT, as a theory centered on goal-directed action, can serve not only as a framework for conducting innovative career-related research with emerging adults, but also as a guide for innovative, context-sensitive career counselling practice with this population.

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