

the résumé's secret identity: a tool for narrative exploration in multicultural career counseling

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The résumé can be a window into the life story of a client and help address barriers to work and life success. Using the résumé as a narrative tool, career counselors can address these barriers and increase clients' employment potential. The strength of this approach is its cultural relevance to clients who may not otherwise seek counseling and as a talking tool within counseling. This article explores the potential for the résumé development and refinement process to enhance the counseling process akin to narrative career counseling. A model and case example are provided to illustrate the application of this approach.

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Résumé counseling and résumé consultation are mainstays of career services. Clients unfamiliar with career counseling, clients with limited economic and educational resources, and clients from ethnic backgrounds that have been historically marginalized may be hesitant to engage in traditional career counseling or personal counseling. However, the concrete need for a résumé may bring them to a career counselor (Piotrowski & Keller, 1990). We propose that when skillfully done, résumé counseling can provide the opportunity to address experiences, fears, and concerns that may influence the client's well-being. Counselors can reasonably assume that the client's primary objective in seeking this type of service is to enhance potential job opportunities. In the professional counseling literature, only a few authors have explored the use of the résumé as a counseling tool to address personal issues that may interfere in the job search or career development process (Krieschok, Ulven, Hecox, & Wettersten, 2000; A. C. Peterson, 1998; D. W. Peterson, 1986). Although having a successful résumé is assumed to facilitate self-esteem and confidence in career coaching and career counseling practice, little guidance exists regarding how this positive outcome may be attained.

We propose that the résumé development and refinement process can be expanded to address a host of mental health and wellness issues that job-seeking clients may face. Furthermore, we propose that a segment of the client population seeking résumé counseling can be better served by using a narrative and constructivist approach (Campbell & Ungar, 2004; Savickas, 1995) to working with the résumé. Narrative approaches engage clients in telling their life and career stories within the context of their experiences. Counsel-

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ing facilitates clients in understanding and rewriting their stories in a therapeutic and growth-oriented process. This can be particularly relevant for clients from multicultural backgrounds because the client context and worldview are integrated (Clark, Severy, & Sawyer, 2004; Costantino, Malgady, & Cardalda, 2005). Unsteady job history, awkward and inconsistent résumé language, and a host of other clues may help counselors identify underlying problem areas and facilitate clients in receiving the necessary counseling that can ultimately lead to a more productive and successful job search and work experience. We provide a brief overview of narrative therapy and describe a specific model of narrative career counseling using the résumé-building or refinement experience. The case of Sandra (a pseudonym) is used to illustrate the application of this model. Finally, multicultural considerations and recommendations regarding the types of clients and situations for which this approach may be most beneficial are discussed.

CRITIC, EDITOR, TEACHER, COACH, COUNSELOR, EMPLOYER: DISTINGUISHING RÉSUMÉ CRITIQUE FROM NARRATIVE RÉSUMÉ COUNSELING

Counselors must not assume that all résumé assistance will have the same effect on a client's well-being. When a client asks for assistance with a résumé, does the counselor approach the task as a critic, editor, teacher, coach, counselor, or employer? Counselors might assume that, regardless of the approach, the client should take away a more polished résumé; however, the client's well-being or potential to stay employed may not have increased in the process. For example, if approaching résumé counseling as a critic, editor, coach, or employer, the counselor most likely will be looking at construction, flow, persuasiveness, formatting inconsistencies, grammatical errors, and the strength of experience conveyed to the reader with a focus on the product, the résumé. Although a counseling approach to résumé development and refinement may have the product in mind, the process itself is what distinguishes narrative résumé counseling from other approaches to the résumé (see Table 1). The process provides the opportunity to help clients identify troubled areas of their employment experience and work toward resolving personal and career issues that may permeate their job search or employment success. The integration of personal and career counseling has been called for repeatedly in the literature (e.g., Imbimbo, 1994; Krumboltz, 1993; Maxwell, 2007). For example, Krumboltz argued that career and personal issues were intertwined and that many issues in career counseling resulted from personal difficulties. To address this complexity, Imbimbo described an eclectic model of counseling in which the directive role of the career counselor and the exploratory role of personal counselor were integrated. Maxwell asserted that narrative approaches in career counseling could effectively address the intersections of career and personal issues.

Some clients may only need, or may only want to invest in, a résumé critique. However, other clients may need more in-depth counseling but are unable to identify that need until the option is presented by a counselor. When a counselor can suggest, through the language of the résumé, that the client might benefit from additional assistance, then the client has a choice in how to proceed. The résumé is a natural foray into narrative career counseling. Before elaborating on this process, we provide a brief overview of narrative career counseling.

TABLE 1

Distinguishing Narrative Résumé Counseling From Résumé Critique

Approach	Narrative Résumé Counseling	Résumé Critique
Focus	Client, process	Résumé, product
Appropriateness	Inconsistent work history Unclear goals Lack of clear vocational growth Sudden changes in type or level of employment	Clear goal with consistent work history Logical progression of increasing responsibility and skill level
Goals	Understanding client's background and barriers Increase client's self-understanding and direction Facilitate client in addressing unresolved issues or current difficulties Prepare client for job search or transition	Develop strong résumé for client job search Assist client in presenting strengths articulately
Examples of process questions	If each job was a chapter, what would the title of each chapter be? What is the story behind the chapter? Tell me a story about how you came to this job. Tell me the story behind this job change. What is the current chapter called? What does the next chapter look like?	What did you accomplish in this job? What does the desired job require, and how can we translate your experience into the language of the desired job? What is the employer looking for, and how can you prove that you have it?
Counselor role	Therapist, facilitator, educator, and advocate	Critic, editor, consultant, educator, adviser, and coach
Desired outcome	A clear and powerful résumé emanating from a healthy and congruent client Identify areas in which a client may need further counseling or advocacy	A clear and powerful résumé

NARRATIVE CAREER COUNSELING

In the past decade, an increased interest in the use of constructivist theory in career counseling has occurred. Among those theories, narrative approaches have been suggested as a fruitful and collaborative way for counselors and clients to engage in the writing and rewriting of career experience and potential (e.g., Brott, 2001; Campbell & Ungar, 2004; Cochran, 1997; Reid, 2005; Savickas, 1995). Narrative approaches have been discussed as an effective approach for groups that traditionally have been marginalized, such as students of color (Clark et al., 2004) and veterans (Krieshok, Hastings, Ebberwein, Wettersten, & Owen, 1999). Furthermore, these approaches have been described as culturally congruent for a number of groups for whom storytelling and narration are historically valued activities and as a means of

accessing the influence of the family on career decisions (Chope & Consoli, 2006; Comas-Díaz, 2006). Brott (2001) eloquently summarized the narrative approach:

The storied approach explores the client's world through story development as a process of co-construction (i.e., to reveal), deconstruction (i.e., to unpack), and construction (i.e., to re-author). . . . Co-construction is an opportunity for the client and counselor to collaboratively reveal the client's life stories from past and present experiences. Deconstruction "unpacks" the stories so that they can be seen from different perspectives. Construction is the part of the process during which the client re-authors stories in a future orientation. As the process develops, counselors notice how stories are constructed, note the limits, and facilitate the exploration of other possible stories. The stories are named (i.e., story title), and relative influence questions are posed to look for effects and relationships between the person and the stories. These relative influence questions are used to map the stories, to map the influence of one's life on the stories, and to recognize other people who have a relationship with the stories (i.e., peopled). (p. 306)

Whereas the collaborative and constructivist nature of narrative counseling lends itself to multicultural counseling, the cultural competence needed for all counselors (Sue, Arredondo, & McDavis, 1992) is still essential for ethical practice. The narrative approach encourages the integration of the client's worldview and experience into counseling. Beyond this, elements of cultural competence are necessary to provide an atmosphere in which the client's story is perceived as being welcome, that the client's experience is understood within a sociopolitical and cultural context, that the choices made by the client are understood within this context, and that the options for future rewriting can be fully explored in culturally relevant ways. The counselor's self-awareness regarding personal cultural beliefs and the ways in which such beliefs may influence the interpretation of the client's experience is critical. In addition, the counselor's understanding of personal sociopolitical history in relation to the client's is also relevant. Having culture-specific knowledge regarding aspects of the client's cultural identity will help guide the counselor in choosing appropriate lines of inquiry aimed at facilitating the client's process rather than simply educating the counselor. As with other forms of career counseling, the need to establish rapport and a strong working alliance with the client is critical. Similarly, skill regarding cross-cultural communication, disclosure, and educating the client regarding the counseling process is also important. Readers are encouraged to become familiar with the Multicultural Counseling Competencies (Arredondo et al., 1996; Sue et al., 1992).

Narrative approaches in career counseling typically encourage clients to tell their stories orally or in writing to a trusted audience such as a counselor, friend, or family member. It is believed that stories are most powerful, and thus influential in a client's life and work, if they are shared (Parry & Doan, 1994). This methodology can certainly be applied to career counseling by having clients reveal and explore anecdotes of their personal, professional, and academic experiences. Oftentimes, however, clients may be uncomfortable divulging the plot lines, themes, and characters of their lives, even to a trained professional. In such situations, the résumé may prove a useful spokesperson, that is, a talking tool for both the counselor and client.

CHAPTER AND VERSE: THE RÉSUMÉ AS A STORY

A narrative approach to résumé counseling assumes that the résumé provides an outline of a story of the client's life. Various chapters are represented through different jobs

and educational experiences. The assumption is that each chapter is far more complex than what is written, and the complexity behind the résumé is worth exploring. In this section, we discuss a model for résumé counseling that blends narrative, multicultural, and advocacy counseling as well as more traditional résumé counseling.

Part 1: Understanding the Client's Story Through Chapters

When approaching résumé counseling as a narrative process, the first step is to help the client understand how the résumé actually tells a story to the reader. Often, clients assume that a résumé is just a list of experiences and skills. However, a résumé conveys much more through language, form, style, and the nuances beyond content. Clients who present with a résumé often come in wanting the counselor to rework and improve the résumé and to give tips and strategies. Whereas concrete guidelines for résumé writing definitely exist, the client must understand that the résumé is telling his or her life story and that the counselor cannot authentically replicate that story. Establishing a strong working relationship and trust can help the counselor and client move toward a collaborative approach to the résumé rather than having the counselor simply serve as an editor or creative writer.

The résumé is a complex representation of the client's life. The reader is left to interpret the story, particularly when important pieces seem to be missing or chapters are presented without clear conclusions or rationale. Clients can have a stronger voice in conveying their stories by understanding what is being told and rewriting those parts that have not been resolved. The rewriting process involves not just rewriting the text, but also helping clients to rewrite the way the experience is influencing their lives. Similarly, the narrative process allows clients the opportunity to fully tell stories that they have not been able to tell before. For example, ending a job under negative circumstances such as burnout, downsizing, harassment, or hostile work environment can leave clients in a negative frame that may impede their ability to fully embrace new work. Often in this process, clients become demoralized and have difficulty identifying and highlighting their strengths. In such stressful circumstances, clients' resilience and growth can be explored as strengths worthy of attention. Conversely, positive experiences in work, when dissected down to a résumé, may lose their power and meaning for clients. Retelling those stories can help clients frame their experiences for more powerful retelling to potential employers, as in a job interview.

In a narrative approach to résumé counseling, the client is asked to name each chapter as it is presented in the résumé and then describe the story of that chapter. The client is also asked whether chapters have been left out. In the telling of the story, the counselor may ask clarifying questions as well as reflect the current story the résumé seems to be telling. The discrepancy between what the client actually experienced and what the résumé reflects provides food for discussion. For the client who enters counseling with the intent to create a résumé from the beginning, the counselor and client work together to coconstruct the story through a guided storytelling process that uses the future story as a guide in framing the client's experiences.

Brott (2001) emphasized deconstruction of the story. When the client requests assistance with an existing résumé, the counselor may ask the client to retell the story

that is already written, encouraging elaboration and exploration of ways to retell the story. In the process, the counselor and client have the opportunity to identify experiences that may be viewed as thorns or burrs that stick out from the résumé. It is these experiences for which the client may most need counseling. In particular, burnout, harassment, discrimination, underemployment, and other experiences may interfere with the job search process or future employment. In addition, these burrs may be perceived by potential employers just as they are detected by the counselor. The client is helped by understanding that these experiences, if not attended to, are often visible and can be a hindrance. Although counseling may not necessarily resolve the experiences, it can provide the client with an opportunity to address unresolved feelings and, when relevant, receive education regarding rights and due process.

Part 2: Looking at Language and Organization as Symptoms of Career or Personal Problems

In the story deconstruction process, a number of clues exist for the client and counselor to consider. Although some difficulties reflected in the résumé may simply result from economic hardship, they also may represent more complex problems. Such examples include sudden demotion, no job title change at the same job, change in locale of employer, switch from for-profit to nonprofit or the reverse, divergence from the dominant career path, unaccounted time periods, or a kitchen-sink résumé that lacks logical progression with seemingly unrelated positions. In addition to indications found in the client's job history, surface-level clues may exist in the résumé's wording that reflect past difficulties. Examples of these clues include convoluted or indirect language, vague or missing objective or summary, vague or missing job titles, a list of job descriptions rather than accomplishments, uneven structure or focus of statements, and use of past verb tense in current position. These clues all suggest further exploration for clearer understanding to determine whether a need for education or counseling is warranted. These flaws in a résumé should not be assumed to always result from a client's lack of understanding of the job search process, proper résumé language, or writing skill. Rather, these flaws may reflect underlying concerns that indicate that the client would benefit from more in-depth counseling.

In naming each job as a chapter, the client can then fill in the story and provide the counselor with a clearer view and opportunity to deconstruct the important elements of the story and note the relationship of this chapter to other chapters. For example, if the chapter is "Beginning in a Nonprofit Organization" and the language describes low-level tasks and lack of energy and initiative, the counselor may ask the client to describe the story behind that job. For this example, assume that the client describes some disillusionment because she found the nonprofit environment to be hostile and lacking in positive support, which was contrary to what she expected. Understanding this story is helpful for the counselor so that work with the client can progress. In this example, the chapter title seems positive and strengths oriented even though the story is not. The telling of the real story can help the counselor and client explore the experiences and consequences of that chapter. This allows hidden challenges and strengths to surface and potentially be used in the résumé.

At the very least, this process allows the counselor and client to identify potential unresolved issues that may surface later in the job search process.

Part 3: Working With the Client to Rewrite the Story or Increase Awareness of the Story Being Told

Whether the client comes in with a completed résumé, a draft, or no résumé at all, the process of rewriting the story is not simply rewording or reformatting the résumé. The process is also a metaphor for the way the client views experiences and how those influence the present and future. The narrative counseling process helps the client to understand and then make more conscious choices about how the story is told and how it will continue. The counselor and client can begin to reframe the client's experiences first within counseling and ultimately in the résumé with insight gained from the deconstruction and storytelling process.

Negative experiences that continue to resonate with the client may be explored in terms of the strengths a client showed in the face of adversity, the skills a client gained in coping with a difficult situation, or the clarity that may have been gained regarding preferred work settings or career goals. Numerous positive reframes can be explored once the client has had the opportunity to tell the story and share pain that may not have been shared previously. These reconstructed stories, born of traumatic and painful experiences, benefit the client twofold—the process itself is cathartic and the result of this process can strengthen both the résumé and subsequent interview process.

When the retelling of stories uncovers choices that were made out of necessity (e.g., sudden change of job for economic reasons), the counseling process can help the client gain a sense of agency by reflecting on the positive coping behaviors in earlier life chapters. Not all material, stories, or chapters may or should enter into the résumé. However, the understanding of these stories and experiences can help the client to express his or her potential to an employer throughout the job search process. Furthermore, the experience of deconstructing and reconstructing the résumé's story can equip the client with increased confidence, self-understanding, and self-efficacy. Unique strengths and accomplishments—once uncovered, dusted off, and properly showcased—add value to the résumé but, more important, add value to the résumé's author.

NARRATIVE RÉSUMÉ COUNSELING AS A MULTICULTURAL AND ADVOCACY APPROACH

Narrative résumé counseling may address multicultural issues in three primary ways: First, the résumé can provide an entrance into career services and help to demystify career and personal counseling for those clients unfamiliar with the counseling process. Second, storytelling has a long and important history among many cultural groups. Cuento therapy or the use of stories (Costantino et al., 2005), storytelling, and the oral tradition represent ways that groups have shared knowledge, understanding, and community. Narrative approaches can help build a bridge between a client's cultural

world and the world of work. Finally, narrative résumé counseling provides the opportunity to identify and address discrimination and microaggressions that may have been experienced by the client in previous employment situations. The résumé is an opportunity for the counselor and client to reflect on situations in which the client has experienced discrimination or harassment. Furthermore, the counselor can educate the client regarding his or her rights and help the client deal with those experiences either through action or counseling. A significant amount of literature describes the importance of career counseling in addressing the effects of job discrimination for clients of color (e.g., Rooney & Liu, 2003), women reentering the workforce (Chae, 2002), and clients who have faced sexual harassment (Morrison, 2002). When the counseling content indicates that empowerment or advocacy roles are appropriate, narrative counseling can help ensure that the client is a collaborator in the process and helps determine the direction taken. Readers are encouraged to become familiar with the Advocacy Competencies adopted by the American Counseling Association (Lewis, Arnold, House, & Toporek, 2003) for guidance regarding the range of ways that counselors may help clients address systemic barriers.

NARRATIVE RÉSUMÉ COUNSELING IN PRACTICE: THE CASE OF SANDRA

We consider the case of Sandra by reflecting on the résumé she brings to her career counseling session. Using the model we presented, we examine Sandra's résumé from a counselor's perspective as opposed to an editor's perspective. We consider Sandra's use of language in her résumé as well as the message she may be implicitly conveying given the way she organized her résumé. Once we have deconstructed the résumé, we highlight potential advocacy opportunities specific to Sandra's situation that counselors may explore.

Sandra is a 42-year-old African American woman in the middle of her accounting career. She has approached a career counselor in hopes of redeveloping her résumé (see the Appendix). Sandra presents as an intelligent, committed professional who seems content with her career, although she admits that her knowledge of how to write an effective résumé is limited.

The first stage of narrative therapy is coconstruction of a story line by the counselor and client (Brott, 2001). Giving the client space to use his or her own language is essential and will enable an authentic client-driven story to develop. With career counseling, the counselor is often already equipped with the client's story line before that client has uttered a single word. It happens the minute the client pulls out that all-encompassing professional document—the résumé. Although the emphasis of the résumé is explicitly professional, subtle, perhaps inadvertent, allusions to personal interests, beliefs, and pursuits often are apparent. As such, even before clients have had a chance to commence the oral construction of their stories by witness of the counselor, they have revealed themselves in writing. A preliminary scan of Sandra's résumé reveals a job gap from 1999 to 2001—an unaccounted period that can compromise Sandra's ability to secure interviews. From an employer's standpoint, a 2-year gap raises too many questions; with limited time to inquire and a healthy stack

of competitive résumés still to review, employers may dismiss Sandra as a viable candidate. In understanding this, a competent career counselor will point out the organizational glitch to Sandra with the intention of addressing the problem before the hiring manager has a chance to act on it. In doing so, the career counselor is in jeopardy of stepping into the nontherapeutic role of an editor, critic, or employer. The focus becomes the résumé and the job search, not the client. Sandra may feel criticized or unsupported—evaluated instead of validated.

What separates counselor from critic is the counselor's empathy-driven curiosity to uncover *why* the gap exists, *what* challenges the gap represents in the client's life, and *how* these challenges can be overcome. In using the proposed narrative résumé therapy model, a career counselor can address both Sandra's résumé and the potential psychological and systemic barriers in her life and career path. The counselor might hypothesize that chapters of Sandra's life story are missing from the résumé, important chapters that are—even in their absence—affecting the way her overall written story is being told. The counselor may then begin looking for more clues to missing chapters in terms of both the organization of the résumé and the language used in the résumé.

Further scrutiny of her résumé reveals that Sandra has, in addition to a job gap, a divergence from her dominant career path. In 2001, following her 2-year gap, she transitioned from Senior Accounting Specialist at a law firm to Fiscal Assistant III at a rehabilitation clinic and then back to Accounts Payable Specialist at a well-known software corporation. This is a noteworthy shift because before she worked at a prestigious law firm, she held another corporate accounting position bearing a similar job title and generic list of responsibilities. In short, Sandra's 20-year accounting career deviated into the nonprofit world for a time (2001–2003) before migrating back to the corporate environment. Furthermore, the locale of her employer changed along with the genre. In the eyes of a career counselor, these changes hint at something more.

The very language Sandra uses in her résumé supports the developing plot of a missing chapter. The focus of Sandra's description of her corporate experience differs from that of her nonprofit experience. For Meyers, Bingham, & Lo, Sandra describes her duties as follows: "Managed the accounts payable department . . ." and "Responsible for vendor file maintenance . . ." These represent a seemingly detached, impersonal portrayal of her job functions that stress required duties and responsibilities. In contrast, for East Side Rehabilitation, the focus of her statements is on helping people: "Assisted physically disabled persons . . ." and "Supported clients by helping . . ." Sandra has chosen vastly different words to represent her nonprofit job (i.e., assisted, supported, helping). Additionally, she has mentioned her clients and her relationship to them for this position, something she did not do for her corporate work experience.

A Hidden Chapter Emerges

Staying true to the narrative therapy approach, Sandra's counselor can now invite Sandra to talk about this chapter of her life in her own words. In maintaining the constructivist attitude, the counselor realizes that the development of some hypotheses must be tempered with the knowledge that the client is the expert—indeed the singular author—of her experience. An initial inquiry might prompt an explanation from Sandra regarding her transition to working for a rehabilitation clinic:

After 10 years of doing accounting and payroll for a law firm and other corporate big wigs, I felt like I should be doing something more meaningful. Or at least do what I've been trained to do for a company that's contributing something—a company that's helping people who need help.

The Plot Thickens

A savvy narrative career counselor would encourage Sandra to elaborate, providing her with the space to fully reveal her story without outside influence:

Well, this is probably more than you asked for, but in February of 1999 I got in a car accident and nearly lost my leg. It was a hit and run. I had to wait almost 2 hours in 20-degree weather for someone to come down the road and pull me out. Anyway, I was in rehab for 6 months and basically bed-ridden for 6 months after that. The law firm I was working at, let's just say they gave me plenty of reason not to come back. And going to interviews with crutches and a noticeable limp didn't bode too well either. So I sort of felt like it was God telling me I had to do something different. Something important. So I listened to Him.

Thus, a counselor's hunch becomes a story, with a hero (the client), protagonists (the driver of the other car and the employer), and a plot twist (the injury). The counselor, in relinquishing the role of critic, underscores the client's voice, language, and self-expression instead of stifling it with expert advice. To continue empowering Sandra's authoring skills, the career counselor asks Sandra to create a title for this chapter of her life. Sandra and her counselor agree on the title "From Corporate to Caring" and use this title throughout the counseling and résumé development process to refer to the 1999–2001 job gap. The counselor encourages Sandra to think about what images could be associated with this title and what prospective employers might assume about her if such a title were explicitly included on her résumé. Through this conversation, the deconstructing process naturally and noninvasively ensues.

In a similar fashion, the counselor can facilitate exploration of other chapters of Sandra's story, such as her reasons for leaving the rehabilitation clinic and returning to the corporate atmosphere after only 2 years of service. According to Sandra, "Altruism doesn't pay the bills. I have two kids and a grandson, so I went back to the corporate world. That's just how life is, I guess. Some things you have to do. Some things you want to do." Sandra might title this chapter "Altruism Doesn't Pay."

With a few strategic questions about the experience listed on her résumé and a commitment to serving Sandra as a counselor and not a critic, the career counselor has inspired Sandra to open up about her traumatic injury, her family values, her spiritual beliefs, her existential conflict between contributing to her community and paying the bills, and her feelings of abandonment by both her former employer and passersby at the scene of her accident. The playing field has broadened. Sandra's counselor can now illuminate some of these areas as a possible focus for counseling, presenting the effects these issues may have had (and may already be having) on her job search. In doing so, the career counselor's value increases, demonstrating the ability to serve as both a career counselor and résumé expert.

In becoming disabled in 1999, Sandra experienced discrimination from her boss and colleagues at a prestigious law firm. Unsure of what to do, she resigned and focused on rehabilitating herself. Two years later, she decided to reenter the workforce,

this time focusing her efforts on what she deemed a worthwhile cause: East Side Rehabilitation. Because of financial stress, she left this position to boost her salary in the corporate arena. This conflict between choosing a path that the client deems worthwhile and a path that is economically stable continues. With some support and guidance, Sandra can gain the skills and resources to advocate for herself and for the disabled culture she has recently joined. Sandra's career counselor, a trusted audience member for this developing chapter in her life story, can be the catalyst that makes this possible. In fact, Sandra's counselor can seize this opportunity to serve as an advocate for her own client, taking the issue to a systemic level, be it sourcing professional organizations and support groups, cowriting a letter to the state representative, examining employment laws related to disabilities, or coordinating speaking engagements. These advocacy actions would need to be driven by Sandra. Although the counselor may believe that the injustice needs to be addressed, the counselor must realize that doing so without Sandra's consent or involvement would be unethical. However, often a client would like to pursue advocacy but needs some support and guidance in the process. This is a very appropriate role for career counselors. In the narrative counseling process, Sandra will have found an ally in many respects. Her initial goal of developing a résumé has been addressed, but, more important, she has been given the chance to restory painful chapters of her life and become an advocate for something in which she believes.

CONSIDERATIONS

A number of considerations exist that guide the counselor's implementation of a narrative approach to career counseling. First, informed consent to the process is critical, especially if the client arrives expecting a 15-minute critique that will fix everything. Appropriate informed consent for extended counseling may provide clients with information regarding the opportunity to spend additional time with the counselor with the goal of preparing for the job search process by having a better understanding of how previous work experiences influence future potential. If the client is interested, then some discussion about the narrative process, using words that make sense to the client, will provide enough information for the client to make a decision about the process.

The second consideration is the context of service. The context will dictate the depth of counseling that can be pursued. For example, if the setting is a career center drop-in format, the initial meeting with the client may be one of engaging the client and providing information regarding the option of continuing individually for several sessions. If the client and counselor want to pursue more in-depth counseling such as narrative approaches, allowing adequate time to process potentially painful experiences that may be exposed is important.

A third consideration is the importance of the Multicultural Counseling Competencies (Sue et al., 1992), the Career Counseling Competencies (National Career Development Association, 1997), and the Advocacy Competencies (Lewis et al., 2003). A model that integrates these three sets of competencies can be used within the narrative approach (Toporek, 2005). The Multicultural Counseling Competencies provide guidance regarding further development the counselor may need to understand the

cultural and historical context relevant to the client. In addition, an important aspect of multicultural competence is that of the counselor's self-awareness. Whereas narrative therapy, by design, invokes the client's perspective, the influence of the counselor's beliefs and attitudes is no less significant. The counselor as a partner in the process plays a valuable role in reflecting the story to the client. However, if that reflection is peppered with unintentional judgment resulting from the counselor's sociopolitical and cultural background, then the counseling cannot facilitate the client's narrative in a positive direction. The Advocacy Competencies provide a framework for understanding different levels of advocacy intervention as well as components of implementation at different levels.

CONCLUSION

Résumé development and critique has been a prevalent part of services offered by career and employment counselors. However, this process is often perceived by counselors and clients as an adjunct advisory service reliant on providing information and constructive criticism. The proposed approach uses the résumé differently—to as a narrative tool—to facilitate a counseling process that allows clients to identify and cope with problematic employment experiences. Résumés, because of their inherently narrative format, offer the counselor content that might otherwise take weeks to uncover in spoken language. Counselors can glean information from their clients' written words as well as from what has been purposefully or unconsciously omitted. In a brief time, career counselors can prove themselves as both résumé experts and intuitive helping professionals by providing a supportive, therapeutic atmosphere in which their clients can intentionally deconstruct and reconstruct their work-life stories.

Although we have found this approach to be effective in our work with clients, we believe that pursuing further empirical investigation regarding counseling process and client outcomes is valuable. In particular, the usefulness of this approach with multiculturally diverse populations would be a good contribution to the literature. In addition, an exploration of the influence of addressing social justice issues in career counseling through a narrative exploration of résumés would be helpful. With the burgeoning literature and enthusiasm for constructivist approaches in career counseling, further development presents exciting potentials.

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APPENDIX

Sandra Simione's Résumé

Sandra Simione

123 Alphabet Drive, Oakland, CA

Objective A challenging accounting position in the Bay Area.

Experience

2005 – Present TechTime Corp. San Jose, CA
Accounting Specialist

- Daily Bank Reconciliation, online daily bank activity, transfer of funds between various accounts.
- Daily Cash Transactions, preparation of daily bank deposit, recording and application of cash receipts to customer accounts, collection calls as applicable.
- Daily inter-company email communication, notification of receipts and password authorization. Responding to collection service and customer requests (invoice copies/W-9 form completion).
- Maintained Accounts Payable vendor files, updated vendor information to Solomon Accounting System. Review, code and data entry of properly approved incoming vendor invoices.

2003 – 2005 Hanso Corporation Redwood Shores, CA
Accounts Payable Specialist

- Responsible for bi-weekly travel expense reimbursements
- Payment processing, audit and reconciliation of corporate loans/credit card accounts
- Maintained and reconciled Petty Cash Account
- Worked independently, resolving problems and setting priorities to meet deadlines
- Responsible for monthly journals entries and General Ledger reconciliations
- Developed A/P processing procedures increasing efficiency and accountability

2001 – 2003 East Side Rehabilitation Oakland, CA
Fiscal Assistant III, Alameda County

- Assisted physically disabled persons by finding and implementing state-mandated regulations of funds to their places of work. Researched, authorized, and approved services for payment.
- Maintained and updated vendor and client files.
- Supported clients by helping them with audit preparations and budget reports.

1994 – 1999 Meyers, Bingham, & Lo Burlingame, CA
Senior Accounting Specialist

- Managed the accounts payable department of a major law firm
- Trained new personnel on firm's accounting department procedures
- Coding of invoices, check requisitions and expense reimbursements
- Accurate and timely generation of 250-300 checks per week
- Responsible for vendor file maintenance and vendor telephone inquiries
- Prepared month-end journal entries and account analysis

1989 – 1994 GalaxyQuest South San Francisco, CA
Accounting Specialist

- Managed the A/P department for an online gaming company 2 years independently

Education

- Bachelor of Business Administration, Sonoma State University

Note. The client's name and some details have been altered to protect client privacy. A/P = accounts payable.

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