**QUALITATIVE SFIS EVALUATION FOR FUTURE (QuSFISEforFU) CODING SYSTEM**

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**Summary.** This chapter presents a new qualitative tool for evaluating the effectiveness of dialogue-based interventions: the Qualitative SFIS Evaluation For Future (QuSFISEforFU). This tool is developed on the basis of the Self-Construction Theory (Guichard, 2004, 2005) and the Life Construction Theory (Guichard, 2013). The chapter also presents a case study that describes the application of the QuSFISEforFU to evaluate the effectiveness of a dialogue intervention with a worker in a public organization. The QuSFISEforFU was administered before and after the intervention to appraise the client’s changes. The results of the analysis using the QuSFISEforFU indicate that the dialogue intervention allowed the participant to have a greater awareness of herself in terms of Subjective Identity Forms System (SIFS), core Subjective Identity Form and aspired Subjective Identity Form to autonomously develop her own career and life path.

**Keywords:** self-construction, life construction, dialogue intervention effectiveness, Qualitative Sfis Evaluation For Future(QuSFISEforFU).

**Introduction**

Research into the effectiveness of career counseling interventions builds the evidence-base for its efficient and effective utilization(Di Fabio, Bernaud, & Kenny, 2013). Conventionally, quantitative methods are used to verify the effectiveness of career counseling interventions and, to that end, successive meta-analytic studies attest to the positive effects of career counseling (Whiston, Goodrich Mitts, & Wright, 2017). Scholars have increasingly called for evaluation methodologies that utilize qualitative approaches (Blustein, Kenna, Murphy, DeVoy, & DeWine, 2005), particularly those methods appropriate to evaluate narrative career counseling (Di Fabio & Maree, 2013; Rehfuss, 2009; Rehfuss & Di Fabio, 2012). For this reason, specific qualitative tools to identify changes after career counseling interventions have developed, for example: the *Future Career Autobiography* (FCA; Rehfuss, 2009; Rehfuss & Di Fabio, 2012), the *Life Adaptability Quality Assessment* (LAQuA; Di Fabio, 2015), and the *Career Counseling Innovative Outcomes coding system* (CCIO; Di Fabio, 2016b). Amidst the emergent panoply of qualitative career counseling methods there is a relative lack of a specially constructed qualitative evaluations tools. Thus, in this chapter, we present a new qualitative evaluation framework with specific theoretical foundations, the framework of Self-Construction Theory (Guichard, 2004, 2005) and Life Construction Theory (Guichard, 2013).

The Self-Construction Theory considers the life construction of an individual in different contexts and the processes that organize these contexts. In the Self-Construction Theory, people are considered as plural beings and individual identity is seen as a dynamic *subjective identity forms systems* (SIFS). Individuals unify themselves, construct expectations about their future, and draw meaning from their own personal experiences. The theory posits individuals a multiplex entity imbued with different facets:

* individuals interact in different *contexts*,
* have different experiences,
* through which they may develop different self-images
* acting different roles
* that vary in different environments.

The construct SIF represents each self that an individual develops in a specific context. A SIF corresponds to a specific social role. A SIF includes the way in which individuals perceived themselves in a specific role and in a specific context. Some SIFs regard contexts where the individuals interact in a specific period of their live; other SIFs are relative to ways in which individuals imagine themselves in the future or are relative to past experiences. The SIFS of an individual is dynamic and some SIFs are more relevant than others. The fundamental SIFs generally produce aspired SIFs. These stimulate individuals to imagine their own future, giving priority to those perspectives that give consistency to all the SIFs of a person.

The Self-Construction Theory responds to the following fundamental question that Guichard (2010) identified: “What could be meaningful to my life?” From this question comes the Life Construction Theory (Guichard, 2013) that emphasizes self-management to build a life full of meaning for the individual. In this framework, the concept of *core SIF* was introduced. A core SIF wants to satisfy a need for self-actualization. It corresponds to a life domain in which the person wants to attain a certain state of excellence as it gives his/her life meaning. The core SIF is linked to an expectation of reaching an objective that has value for the person (Guichard, 2013), an objective full of meaning, and in the process of life construction it constructs the meaningfulness of life. In Life Construction Theory, dialogue counseling (Guichard, 2008, 2009; Collin & Guichard, 2011) is centered on forms of reflexivity to raise awareness of one’s own SIFS to make individuals able to design and re-design themselves (Guichard, 2013). Guichard (2004, 2005) individuates two different forms of reflexivity: dual and ternary. The process of dual reflexivity refers to the processes of identification that regards the construction of the individual as images of the other in the attempt to become as this model (or not to become like this model in terms of specific counter-model). The process of ternary reflexivity regards the dialogue with the Self in which individual occupies three possible positions: the "I" assumes a certain position, the "you" who responds, and the "he/she" as a third person's point of view. Individuals have the possibility to elaborate alternative interpretations of their experiences, taking away from them and their immediate meaning in defining future goals and building their own Self in this way.

Dialogue counseling works on SIFs and SIFS. In this theoretical framework, the transition from career project to life project underlines the subjective identity forms system in relation to the roles individuals attributed to themselves. This happens not only in a professional context but in all contexts of life, thus defining a wider project that considers individuals in their complexity and plurality. The evolution of Self-Construction Theory and Life Construction Theory indicates that in postmodern societies, individuals unify themselves by connecting their different life experiences with the narratives of future events, thus contributing to the meaning of their lives.

**Purpose of the Study**

The Qualitative SFIS Evaluation For Future (QuSFISEforFU) is based on the Self-Construction Theory and the Life Construction Theory. QuSFISEforFU was developed as a new narrative qualitative tool for verifying the effectiveness of dialogue in career counseling. The QuSFISEforFU is intended to respond to the current need for qualitative tools to determine the effectiveness of the dialogue career counseling interventions for the 21st century. A case study was presented to demonstrate the QuSFISEforFU and its coding system as a method for assessing client change after a dialogue intervention “Constructing my Future Purposeful Life” (Di Fabio, 2014). Two questions guided the case study: (a) Can the QuSFISEforFU be used to assess for client change after a dialogue intervention? and (b) Can the QuSFISEforFU be used to describe the sort of changes that may be facilitated by a dialogue intervention?

**Method**

**Participant and Context**

The participant in this study, Monica (a pseudonym), was a 47 years old worker in a public organization that offers guidance intervention and training. Her work regards in particular the design of guidance and training interventions, but also in some cases the provision of services to users. She decided to participate in a “Constructing Future Purposeful Life” intervention because she felt the necessity to reflect on her professional and personal life and to found the energy and motivation to continue to work in a working reality that imposes many constraints.

**Qualitative SFIS Evaluation For Future (QuSFISEforFU)**

The QuSFISEforFU comprises six questions administered before and after the dialogue career counseling intervention, providing access to the client’s narrative expression at two points in time and allow comparison of how the client organizes these narrations before and after the narrative intervention. There are four primary questions and two additional control questions administered before and after the intervention:

1. What are your main goals for the future?
2. What are your main doubts for the future?
3. What are the main obstacles?
4. What is your dream?
5. How do you imagine the future in the short, medium, long-term?
6. What are your key resources to use?

The narratives elicited by these six questions are coded according to nine categories:

1. From “Decisional disinterest” to “Decisional involvement in examining own SFIS to design own life”;
2. From “Unawareness” to “Identification” (SSIF, Aspired SIF, Core SIF)”;
3. From “Identification” to “Specification” (SSIF, Aspired SIF, Core SIF);
4. From “Rigidity” to “Openness about how to realize him/herself”;
5. From “Simple vision” to “Expert vision (Openness to complexity)” in constructing the new chapter of own life in terms of diverse paths, objectives, possibilities;
6. From “Openness to complexity” to “Acceptance of change”;
7. From “Acceptance of change” to think about “Challenges as opportunities”;
8. From “Opportunities in challenges” to “Hardiness/Resilience/Think out of the box” about him/herself for the new chapter of own life;
9. “Rumination or absence of change in reading into him/herself and the situation”.

**Procedure**

The QuSFISEforFU was administered before and after the dialogue career counseling intervention by a psychologist trained in the administration of qualitative instruments. Monica’s initial and subsequent responses to the six narrative written questions were also paired for narrative comparison by three independently trained experts in career counseling.

Monica participated in a “Constructing my Future Purposeful Life Intervention” (Di Fabio, 2014). The intervention aims to strengthen participants’ reflexivity, improve their ability to elaborate through narratives their personal and professional problems, identify real meanings, and to design more effectively projects in different contexts. The intervention is articulated in three modules.

The first module of intervention is composed of two exercises. The first, the “Life Design Genogram” consists of two genograms: the Career Construction Genogram based on the Career Construction Theory (Savickas, 2005, 2011) and the Life Construction Genogram based on the Life Construction Theory (Guichard, 2013). The second exercise “Me and the future” seeks to improve the meta-competence of adaptability in relation to these personal mottos. The second module is called “Self-advising the Future Self” this enhances reflection on life roles. The third module is called “Constructing the Purposeful Self” and refers to the process “To make oneself self” (Guichard, 2004).

**Ethics**

Steps were taken to ensure Monica’s wellbeing throughout the study. She was given feedback by the career counselor during the dialogue career counseling session. The intervention was conducted in accordance with Italian Privacy Law and the anonymity was guaranteed.

**Criteria for Quality Assurance**

In relation to qualitative assurance, it is fundamental to guarantee the trustworthiness of the results using various strategies during the data collection and analysis: credibility, confirmability, transferability, and dependability (Maree, 2012). Credibility of data refers to “factors such as the significance of results and their credibility for participants and readers” (Maree, 2012, p. 141). The credibility was ensured by external verification of the results, which enables the researcher to assess the credibility of the results. This was achieved by submitting the documentation to researchers who did not participate in the research and asking them to assess the way in which the conceptual analysis was carried out. Confirmability refers to “the objectivity of the data and the absence of research errors. Results can be regarded as confirmable when they are derived from the participants and the research conditions rather than from the (subjective) opinion of the researcher” (Maree, 2012, p. 142). Confirmability was achieved from external researchers in guidance and career counseling who did not participate in the study and who assessed whether the methods and general procedures of the study were described clearly and in sufficient detail to allow for data verification. Furthermore, the data obtained, the methods used, and the decisions made during the intervention were fully documented. Transferability refers to “the extent to which the results can be ‘ex- ported’ and generalised to other contexts” (Maree, 2012, p. 142). Transferability was ensured by providing an accurate description of Monica’s personal situation and the techniques used to elicit data. Also information was provided on the context of the case to enable readers to judge the applicability of the findings to other settings. It is important to underline that the research was based on comprehensive descriptions of the case study without any attempts at generalization. Dependability refers to “the stability and consistency of the research process and methods over time and influences the degree of control in a study” (Maree, 2012, p. 141). Dependability was ensured through the independent analysis of Monica’s QuSFISEforFU by three experts to enhance the accuracy of the deductive process and to ensure that the identified themes accurately represented the data.

**Results**

What follows is a summary if Monica’s responses to the six questions of the QuSFISEforFU before and after the “Constructing my Future Purposeful Life” intervention and the results of the analysis through the QuSFISEforFU coding system based on the QuSFISEforFU nine categories. The verbatim responses of the participant have been lightly edited to preserve their authenticity.

Monica’s initial answer to the first QuSFISEforFU question “What are your main goals for the future?” was: “My main goal for the future is improve my professional situation but I don’t know how can I do” After the intervention, she stated: “My main goal for the future is to offer to clients services and interventions really useful for them. I think that I understand that my work is fundamental for my self-realization but only if I’m able to do something that is really useful for others”. (Category 2: from “Unawareness” to “identification”).

Monica’s answer to the second QuSFISEforFU question, “ What are your main doubts for the future?” was: “My principal doubts for the future are relative to the situation of changes and instability that characterizes my organizations in this moment but it is the reality and I have to consider it in developing my future project”. Her subsequent answer to the second QuSFISEforFU question was as follows: “The intervention permitted me to reflect about my role and about I would like to construct my future. I think that in this moment I concentrate especially on my professional life and on this situation of change in my organization. I perceive this situation as an opportunity because my organization is giving me some responsibilities in the reorganization of services for clients. So I have the opportunity to introduce new services more anchored to recent scientific theories in my field. Therefore I think that this can be really useful to help clients” (Category 7: from “acceptance of change” to think about “Challenges as opportunities”).

Monica initially responded to the third QuSFISEforFU question “What are the main obstacles?” was: “I think that my principal obstacles both personal and professional are relative to my self-esteem and my professional self-efficacy, and there is no possibility to improve these aspects”. Her subsequent answer to the third QuSFISEforFU question after the intervention was as follows: “After the intervention I understand that I have much more resources that I could image. Sometimes I get discouraged because I have low self-esteem and self-efficacy and this may be an obstacle. However, I have had many successes in my personal and professional life and I can count on relationships with my family and colleagues. In this moment of my life in which I am realized in all my familiar roles, I feel that I can fully invest in my work. I would like to actively participate in the reorganization of the guidance and training service and have a management role. I think that to fully realize myself it is important to make sure that my work will be really useful for others. I realize myself if I’m able to help others. (Category 4: From “Rigidity” to “Openness about how to realize him/herself).

Monica responded to the fourth QuSFISEforFU question “What is your dream?” prior to the intervention by stating the following: “Sincerely, I don’t have a professional or personal dream”. Her subsequent answer to the fourth QuSFISEforFU question was as follows: “The intervention permitted me to reflect on my different roles and perhaps to think about my dream. On personal point of view I would like to maintain all my roles as life partner, daughter, friends. I’m fully satisfied of my personal life. My dream is thus to improve my professional life perhaps having a leadership and management role and to do something concrete to be useful for other and helping them (Category 1: From “Decisional disinterest” to “Decisional involvement in examining own SFIS to design own life).

Monica’s initial answer to the fifth QuSFISEforFU question “How do you imagine the future in the short, medium, long-term?” was as follows: “I’m this moment there are so many changes in my organization and I have to understand how to cope with this challenge and complexity”. Her subsequent answer to the fifth QuSFISEforFU question was as follows: “From a professional point of view I think that in the short term I have to face with the change in my organization and restructuring my daily work according to the new bureaucratic norms. For example I have to rethink the structure of the guidance and training intervention on the based of the new bureaucratic and economic constraints. So I have the same role but in a new framework. In a medium term I would like to improve my competences perhaps also my managerial competences because I would like in a long-term assume a management role in my organization in order to be able to decide and act politically for realizing services really useful to others. Regarding my personal life I would like that always remain in this way also in the future. (Category 6: From “Openness to complexity” to “Acceptance of change”).

Monica’s initial answer to the sixth QuSFISEforFU question “What are your key resources to use?” consisted of the following: “My key resource used to face this challenging period is my professional experience, matured in many year of work in my organization”. Her subsequent answer to the sixth QuSFISEforFU question was as follows: “I realized that I have many resources not only my professional experience. They are my desire to acquire even more competences, my curiosity for the future, and also the good relationships with my colleagues. I can use all these resources to face the complex situation of change that regards my organizations and the changes in bureaucratic rules. I recognize this complexity as a challenge for my professional growth and to try to be useful to improve the quality of the offered service and be really useful for client. I would be have a role in the reorganization of services and interventions for clients provided by my organization to offer a concrete contribution to society” (Category 5: From “Simple vision” to “Expert vision (Openness to complexity) in constructing the new chapter of own life”).

**Discussion**

The results of this case study indicate that the QuSFISEforFU and its coding system provide a promising tool for assessing growth in the dialogue career counseling. In this case, the client showed an evolution across a number of important dimensions in particular of her work life, as reflected in a comparison of the narrative before and after the “Constructing my Future Purposeful Life” intervention.

From the analysis, it emerged that Monica presented changes in narratives in terms of different categories of the QuSFISEforFU Coding System. She showed a change from “Decisional disinterest” to “Decisional involvement in examining own SSIF to design own life” (Category 1). It is possible to recognize a decisional disinterest in the fact that before intervention Monica stated that she had not a dream. Instead after the intervention, that permits a reflection on her different life and work roles, she has the possibility to reflect on her Subjective Identity Forms System (SIFS) and to understand that in this moment of her life her role as worker has a central position in her system. Monica showed a change from “Unawareness” to “Identification” (Category 2). In fact before the intervention she do not know how to improve her professional situation and she has thus not a clear self-awareness. After the intervention she identified the central role of work in her life and she realized that her work is fundamental for her realization only if permitting to obtain something that it is really useful for others. Monica presented also a change from “Rigidity” to “Openness about how realize him/her self” (Category 4). At the beginning of the intervention she saw only internal obstacles. After the intervention Monica realized that she has internal resources to realize her identified aspired SIF relative to have a management role in her organization to do something really useful for other people. Furthermore, Monica showed a change from “Simple vision” to “Expert vision” (Openness to complexity) in constructing new chapter of own life” (Category 5). Before the intervention she recognized only her professional experience as a resource to face this challenging period of her working life. After the intervention she recognized that she has many resources such as her professional competences, her curiosity for the future, her good relationships with her colleagues. Above all, she started from the analysis of the complexity of her current work situation to understand the importance for her to have a role in the reorganization of services and interventions for clients to offer a concrete contribution to help them and the society as a whole. Monica showed also a change from “Openness to complexity” to “Acceptance of change” (Category 6). At the beginning of intervention she recognized and she is stimulating by the complexity of her current working situation and after the intervention she is be able to project her future in short, medium and long terms projecting different aspired SIFs in the future. Finally Monica presented a change from “acceptance of change” to think about “Challenges as opportunities” (Category 7). Before the interventions she considered her working role only in relation to the issue of change in her organization and after the intervention she was able to identify the current changing situation as an opportunity for the development of her professional Self.

The “Constructing my Future Purposeful Life” intervention (Di Fabio, 2014) appears to be a useful intervention modality. A follow-up session carried out 6 weeks after the end of intervention revealed that there was some implementation of the new intentions. Monica was a member of the team that had the task to reorganize all the guidance and training services offered by her organization. She started a course to better understand the new bureaucratic norms and to acquire management competences in public organizations. It would be important to conduct a follow-up assessment 6 to 12 months after the intervention to confirm the stability of the results obtained.

At the end of the “Constructing my Future Purposeful Life” intervention Monica is more aware of her SSIF that includes also different SIFs relative to personal aspects (e.g., life partner, daughter, friends) but, above all, her core SIF is relative to her work role. The core SIF is in fact a SIF within which the person wants to achieve a need for self-actualization. It corresponds to a life domain in which the person wants to realize his/her life meaning. The core SIF is linked to an expectation of reaching an objective that has value and is full of meaning for the person and permits to realize his/her life meaningfulness (Guichard, 2013). The core SIF constitutes the basis and generates aspired SIF, the projection into the future of meaningful roles for the individual. In this regard, Monica expressed her aspired SIF relative to the desire to assume a management role in her organization in order to be able to decide and act politically for realizing services really useful to others. Overall, the analysis that compared Monica’s pre- and post-dialogue career counseling intervention narratives showed the presence of narrative change using the QuSFISEforFU coding system, thus also underlining the effectiveness of the “Constructing my Future Purposeful Life” intervention (Di Fabio, 2014).

The case study has some limitations. Although steps were taken to enhance the trustworthiness and credibility of the study, future research should not only test the “Constructing my Future Purposeful Life” intervention with a multitude of other clients but also use the QuSFISEforFU coding system to evaluate its utility. This single case may have pedagogical benefits with respect to practitioners using the case to reflect on their own practices and generate new perspectives; however, quantitative studies involving pre- and post-test measures would provide a more convincing test of its effectiveness. Although the QuSFISEforFU coding systems is bespoke to Guichard’s theory, it may be evaluated by using it with other narrative approaches to career counselling.

Analysis of this case study revealed client change after a dialogue career counseling through the use of the QuSFISEforFU coding system. This case study presents a new qualitative tool that has the potential to provide important information for counselors seeking to assess the outcomes of dialogue career counseling. This new tool is specially constructed upon the framework of Self-Construction Theory (Guichard, 2004, 2005) and Life Construction Theory (Guichard, 2013). This dialogue intervention allows individuals to reflect on their SSIF, Core SIF and Aspired SIF (Guichard, 2004, 2005, 2013) to construct life and work project where people fully achieve their self-realization and reach objectives that are worthy and full of meaning for them permitting them to realize a whole life meaningfulness (Guichard, 2013).

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