THE JOURNEY OF UNDECIDED FRESHMEN COLLEGE STUDENTS WHO PARTICIPATE IN THE CAREER CONSTRUCTION INTERVIEW PROCESS

By

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ABSTRACT

In light of the changing 21st century world of work, millennial college students are entering the workforce more and more each year as many individuals from the Baby Boomer generation are retiring. These millennial students strive for meaning in their work, which is also reflected in their search for a college major. When traditional-aged freshmen college students arrive on their college campuses, many are undecided in their choice of major. Career counselors utilize a variety of career assessments to assist these undecided students in identifying majors and careers that would be a good fit for their interests and personalities. While many quantitative assessments have been incorporated in the career development process, qualitative assessments, like the Career Construction Interview (CCI), are more recent assessment approaches, which are still being assessed as to whether they adequately support college students in their academic and career related decision making. Through interviews with seven undecided freshmen college students, this research study explored the meaning made by these students who participated in the CCI process. The following five themes emerged: relationship between expectation and satisfaction, personalization, self-awareness, connection to the past, and authenticity and depth.

INDEX WORDS: Career counseling, undecided freshmen college students, choosing a major, Career Construction Interview, career assessments
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DEDICATION

To Mom, Dad, and Aunt Molly:

Thank you for inspiring this dream and for supporting me as I pursued it!
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Not all who wander are lost.

(Tolkien, 1954)

It was a warm August day when Julie (a hypothetical student) arrived on her college campus, ready to begin her upcoming collegiate journey. While excited about her freshmen semester’s courses, she was still unsure about which major to choose considering all of her interests. Prior to the start of the semester, she had briefly met with a freshmen academic advisor who had reassured her that she had time to choose a major over the next year; however, when hearing from peers about their majors and potential career paths during the first week of classes, she began feeling insecure and anxious about making such a huge life decision.

Lacking job experience prior to college, Julie did not fully understand how her interests could potentially translate into particular career fields and complementary majors. Due to her indecision, Julie decided to focus on completing her college’s foundational courses for as long as possible to give her time to make a final decision about her major. After completing most of these courses over four semesters, Julie reached the end of her sophomore year still undecided about her major. Her institution had informed her that she would need to choose a major at the end of the year for her to graduate in four years. Since she had a partial financial scholarship covering only four years, Julie knew that if she was not able to graduate in this time frame, she might not have funds to continue with a fifth year.

Feeling more pressure than she had ever experienced in her life, Julie knew she had to make a decision about her major so she could continue her degree and hopefully graduate on time. She was particularly drawn to one area of study that had also been an interest in middle and high school. Considering the major in this field of interest, she was unsure as to what
careers she could pursue post graduation with this educational foundation. Even though it may not have been her first choice if given a longer period of time to consider her options, she decided to choose this major, and explore possible career paths that could align with this area of study.

Julie is not unlike many undecided college students who choose a major out of desperation to graduate on time rather than continuing to explore and finding a major that fits their interests and abilities. Many millennial undecided college students today are challenged by all of the mixed messages regarding major selection and how majors relate to career paths, and it is the responsibility of universities to provide support for these students as they explore their options when they arrive on their college campuses (Soria & Stebleton, 2013). One of the ways universities provide support for undecided students is through the campus career center and career counselors who support students in their overall career development (Reddan & Rauchle, 2012). Specifically, to support undecided college students in their major selection, career counselors often utilize career assessment tools to help students develop their self awareness and explore how their personality or interests align with certain career fields (Armstrong & Rounds, 2010; Jurgens, 2000). While many of these assessment approaches come from a quantitative perspective, such as the TypeFocus (Wood, 1997) and the Strong Interest Inventory (SII, 2004), these assessments may limit students’ understanding of the many career choices that could be a good fit for them since they do not incorporate the meaning students derive from their lived experiences (Soria & Stebleton, 2013).

Because of a growing recognition of the limitations of quantitative assessment, there has been an emergence in recent years of qualitative assessment approaches, which promote a more holistic perspective of career development, focusing on the meaning individuals derive from
their lived experiences (Gysbers, 2006). Since qualitative assessment approaches have developed more recently compared with traditional quantitative approaches that have been around for decades, there is still very little research on the meaning individuals make from their qualitative assessment experiences. The Career Construction Interview (CCI; Savickas 1998, 2002, 2009, 2011a) is one qualitative approach, which focuses on the meaning that stems from an individual’s narrative (Glavin & Berger, 2012). While a few studies have researched how this assessment tool was used with various populations (Barclay & Wolff, 2012; Rehfuss, Del Corso, et al., 2011; Taber et al., 2011), there is a lack of research as to how undecided college students make meaning from qualitative career assessment approaches such as the CCI. In light of this deficit, this research study focused on the lived experiences of undecided freshmen college students who went through the CCI process and examined the meaning they made from their assessment experiences.

**Millennial College Students**

Traditional-age college students today, like Julie, represent the millennial generation (or Generation Y) (Shragay & Tziner, 2011) who were born between 1980 and 2000 (De Hauw & De Vos, 2010) and who are continuing to enter the university system each year. With so many Baby Boomers (i.e., individuals born between 1946 and 1964) (Twenge, 2010) retiring, the world of work is quickly changing with this influx of young professionals (Ordun & Karaeminogullari, 2013). Millennials have showcased traits including valuing purpose and meaning in their work, desiring work-life balance in their career selection, expecting high salary and benefits for the work they accomplish, and ultimately wanting to make a significant contribution to the world through their unique talents and abilities (De Hauw & De Vos, 2010;
Howe & Strauss, 2007; Ng & Gossett, 2013; Ng, Schweitzer & Lyons, 2010; Twenge 2010; Twenge, 2013; Twenge & Campbell, 2008).

Since millennial college students have grown up receiving considerable attention from their parents who have told them they have the potential to do anything with their lives, many current college students have been left confused by all of the educational and career options (Shragay & Tziner, 2011; Twenge & Campbell, 2008). Specifically, when entering college, some millennials find the task of choosing a major to be challenging since they believe they are capable and talented in many subject areas (Twenge & Campbell, 2008). To support millennial college students, it is essential to explore the challenges they may face, especially for those who enter undecided about their major and career direction.

**Career Development Challenges of Undecided College Students**

Choosing a major is a necessary step towards earning a college degree and eventually deciding on a future career direction (Bullock-Yowell, McConnell, & Schedin, 2014); however, millennial college students today encounter a myriad of challenges as they face the demands of the 21st century world of work (Bullock-Yowell et al., 2014; Carduner, Padak, & Reynolds, 2011; Galilee-Belfer, 2012; Ronan, 2005; Schmitt & Boushey, 2012; Stater, 2011). For many millennial college students, establishing what their purpose might be, reflected initially in their major choice, is one of the greatest challenges they face in early adulthood since many have not chosen a specific career path that ties back to a complementary major (Bullock-Yowell et al., 2014; Carduner et al., 2011; Chickering, 2011; Galilee-Belfer; Hayrapetyan & Kuruvilla, 2012; Porter & Umbach, 2006). Additionally, some students find it difficult to choose a major due to lack of real-world experience, while others may have too many interests and talents making narrowing down their options seem impossible (Bullock-Yowell et al., 2014; Galilee-Belfer,
Many parents also place great pressure on their children to pursue certain college majors and careers that may yield higher economic gain after college without considering whether the major and career path suit their child’s skill set and overall interests (Galotti, Ciner, Altenbaumer, Geerts, Rupp, & Woulfe, 2006).

In addition to these challenges, some institutions and majors require students to decide on their major early in order to complete the program in four years, which causes many students to feel the pressure to decide on a major and career path in their freshmen year (Cuseo, 2005). Without having extensive experiences to make an educated decision regarding which career path to take, the pressure many students feel from their universities may cause them to make premature or impulsive decisions regarding a major (Cuseo, 2005). Also, many universities have over 100 majors from which students can choose, in addition to the options of adding a minor or certificate to their educational credentials (Carduner et al., 2011). This abundance of options in many institutions increases the students’ challenge to specify a major, especially when a career path is unknown. Finally, for many college students, the cost of tuition has the potential to affect one’s major choice (Stater, 2011), especially regarding those students who are unsure about possible majors and career paths. For example, students who change majors several times during their college experience could potentially increase their overall cost of college due to increased time spent obtaining their college degrees (Ronan, 2005). The reality of rising costs of college tuition causes many students and parents to consider whether going to college is indeed a worthwhile endeavor if they are unable to secure a job upon graduation that allows them to pay off their college debt in a timely manner (Ronan, 2005).

While some students may give in to these challenges early in their college experience, premature decisions regarding major selection can be detrimental and may bring about negative
consequences (Carduner et al, 2011). Empowering students to develop their own career awareness and competence increases their ability to develop purpose and meaning within their major selection and hopefully make meaningful career development decisions throughout their lifetime (Galilee-Belfer, 2012; Grier-Reed & Skaar, 2010). Therefore, it is essential that universities support undecided students’ career and major exploration early in their college experience so they will be able to connect with a field of study that matches their talents and interests, hopefully allowing them to graduate on time, in the most cost efficient way possible.

**How Universities Respond to the Career Development Needs of Undecided Students**

Since many institutions prefer their students to decide upon a major in their freshman or sophomore year, many offer support to students who are in the major selection process (Cuseo, 2005). One way that universities support undecided students is by providing career development courses that are dedicated to the major and career exploration process (Garis, 2014; Tampke & Durodoye, 2013). These career courses provide an empowering environment where students can make informed decisions about their major and career options (Parks, 2011). Also, many universities have incorporated career development material into their existing curricula, providing their students with major-specific career development support (Coulter-Kern, Coulter-Kern, Schenkel, Walker, & Fogle, 2013). Additionally, universities promote the use of career centers on their campuses, which provide direct assistance to their students as they navigate the major and career exploration process. Career centers on college campuses are the main location where career counseling takes place on a regular basis, and with the current economic challenges that young millennials are facing upon graduation, career centers are more essential than ever (Ledwith, 2014; Schaub, 2012). In order to meet students’ array of career development needs, career centers offer many services including individual career counseling, instructional
workshops, job and internship resources, and networking opportunities with employers (Schaub, 2012).

While career counselors have addressed the challenges of undecided students for over 70 years (Jurgens, 2000), the specific “number of undecided students varies across institutions… the volume it represents highlights the large impact and importance of understanding and assisting the undecided” (Bullock-Yowell et al., 2014, p. 22). To address the career development needs of undecided students, many career counselors utilize a variety of career assessment approaches (i.e., qualitative and quantitative) that help students explore their personality, interests, values, and skills (Armstrong & Rounds, 2010; Maree, 2013). When supporting students in their major and career exploration through assessment, it is essential that counselors consider the unique needs of students because the “one-size-only approach does not fit all” (Harrington & Long, 2012, p. 91). For instance, many quantitative assessments may not take into account the students’ unique characteristics such as racial and cultural background, socioeconomic status, and individual sexual orientation (Whiston & Raharida, 2005). Research has shown that qualitative assessment approaches capture individuals’ unique lived experiences, including those from “historically underserved student populations” (Soria & Stebleton, 2013, p. 39). It is crucial that career counselors promote socially just career counseling through equitable access to career assessments that best meet students’ individual career development challenges and goals, whether it be from a quantitative or qualitative perspective (Sampson, 2009-2010). Therefore, in an effort to support undecided college students in their major selection, it is necessary that career counselors understand how to utilize either qualitative and/or quantitative career assessments independently or in an integrative way to best meet the needs of students.
Qualitative Versus Quantitative Career Assessments

Quantitative career assessments have been used for many years to educate individuals on their interests and personality traits and how these relate to work environments (Armstrong & Rounds, 2010). In general, career assessment methods identify individuals’ interests, personality traits, abilities and values (Armstrong & Rounds, 2010). Two quantitative career assessment approaches that are regularly used in career counseling settings are the Strong Interest Inventory (SII; 2004) and the TypeFocus (Wood, 1997), which is based on the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI, 1943, 1976; Chauvin, Miller, Godfrey, & Thomas, 2010; Schaub, 2012).

The Strong Interest Inventory (SII; 2004), originally developed by E. K. Strong, was launched as the Strong Vocational Interest Blank (Strong, 1927) and then later as the Strong-Campbell Interest Inventory (Campbell, 1974). Then in 1994, it was updated to the Strong Interest Inventory (SII; 1994) with the addition of John Holland’s theory of vocational personalities and RIASEC typology (Holland, 1959, 1966, 1973, 1985, 1997). The SII is a quantitative career assessment that supports individuals as they explore career environments that complement their personality types and interests (McMahon & Watson, 2012). The underlying concept of the SII is that individuals with similar interests will be attracted to complementary types of occupations and work environments (Donnay, Morris, Schaubhut, & Thompson, 2004). The SII specifically identifies individuals’ interests and personality traits found within six areas including (R) Realistic, (I) Investigative, (A) Artistic, (S) Social, (E) Enterprising, and (C) Conventional, pointing individuals to certain career fields within these six themes (Reardon & Bullock, 2004). Through a counselor’s facilitation of the results, individuals can discover their top areas of interest (McMahon & Watson, 2012), such as AES (i.e., Artistic, Enterprising, and Social), which give an indication of work environments to consider when exploring various
career fields. The SII has been extensively researched and critiqued over the years and has been shown to be an excellent tool when supporting students in their major selection (Bullock, Andrews, Braud, & Reardon, 2009-2010; Coulter-Kern et al., 2013; Porter & Umbach, 2006).

Another quantitative assessment, the TypeFocus (Wood, 1997), which is based on the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI, 1943, 1983), encourages individuals to explore their personality and work environment fit. Since 1943, the MBTI has been one of the most familiar, utilized, and valid career assessments on the market (Cooper, Knotts, McCord, & Johnson, 2012; Pulver & Kelly, 2008). Based on Jung’s typology, Isabel Briggs Myers and her mother Katherine C. Briggs developed the MBTI (MBTI, 1943, 1983; Kennedy & Kennedy, 2004), which focuses on four scales representing opposite preferences (McCaulley, 2000). Similar to the MBTI, the TypeFocus includes the four scales found within the MBTI: Extraversion versus Introversion, Sensing versus Intuition, Thinking versus Feeling, and Judging versus Perceiving (Cooper et al.). Within these four scales, 16 possible personality types are produced based on the preferences of the individual taking the assessment (Pinkney, 1983). Once an individual knows their four-letter type (i.e., INFJ), they are able to read a description about their type and use it as a road map to explore career environments that would complement their preferences (Kennedy & Kennedy, 2004; McCaulley, 2000). Utilizing the TypeFocus assessment in career counseling with undecided students promotes students’ understanding of why they are drawn towards certain careers, which may in turn facilitate their major selection (Pulver & Kelly, 2008).

**Qualitative Career Assessment**

In light of the current challenges many college students face, career counselors are exploring new ways of assisting their students, “attempting to emphasize identity rather than personality, adaptability rather than maturity, stories rather than scores, and action rather than
intention” (Maree, 2013, p. 414). Qualitative career assessment approaches have their roots in constructivism (Whitson & Rahardia, 2005), which allows for a collaborative relationship between the counselor and client as they work together to make meaning through the client’s narrative (Schultheiss, 2005). While quantitative career assessments take an objective perspective (i.e. considering an individual’s TypeFocus results and careers that match that type), qualitative career assessments are also essential in discovering themes in individuals’ lives, which can shed light on other aspects not uncovered in quantitative methods (Schultheiss, 2005).

One of the first qualitative assessments developed was the Career Construction Interview (CCI; Savickas 1998, 2002, 2009, 2011a), originally known as the Career Story Interview, which is based on career construction theory (Savickas, 1998, 2005, 2011a; Rehfuss, Del Corso, et al., 2011). The CCI supports individuals as they construct their own identity and discover how to make meaning, find purpose, and determine direction in their career journey (Busacca, 2007; Scholl & Cascone, 2010). To guide individuals through this narrative approach, career counselors utilize the five core questions of the CCI, which enable individuals to begin creating their own career stories through the identification of major themes (Taber, Hartung, Briddick, Briddick, & Rehfuss, 2011). Overall, the CCI promotes clients’ engagement in the counseling process and ultimately their personal reflection, growth, and change (Rehfuss, Del Corso et al., 2011). By encouraging clients to find their own meaning through the construction of their career stories, they engage more fully in the career development process, not only becoming more employable but also entering into a love for lifelong learning (Maree, 2013).

**Previous Studies Using the Career Construction Interview**

There have been a few research studies that have explored how the Career Construction Interview (CCI; Savickas 1998, 2002, 2009, 2011a) has been utilized with various populations to
provide a structured process for career exploration and development (Barclay & Wolff, 2012; Rehfuss, Del Corso, et al., 2011; Taber et al., 2011). One quantitative study compared the themes derived from the CCI with the themes from the Strong Interest Inventory’s (SII; 2004) RIASEC model to investigate their comparable validity (Barclay & Wolff, 2012). Results from this study indicated that there was a strong correlation (median = .710), indicating that RIASEC codes could be successfully derived from CCI responses (Barclay & Wolff, 2012). Secondly, the CCI was examined through the lens of counselors to see if the assessment itself assisted them with helping their clients to create life themes and also make meaningful career decisions (Rehfuss, Del Corso, et al., 2011). This qualitative research study included 18 counselor participants who went through the CCI process. Researchers discovered that participants’ recollection of role models (i.e., first question on the CCI) and the integration of the RIASEC themes were their most meaningful aspects of the CCI (Rehfuss, Del Corso, et al., 2011). The results revealed that counselor participants found the CCI to be a positive assessment intervention, especially when helping clients identify their life themes and make meaningful career decisions (Rehfuss, Del Corso, et al., 2011). Finally, another qualitative study conducted by Taber et al. (2011) examined how the CCI aided a female graduate student who was unsure about which one of two professional tracks to take. Results of this case study revealed that by incorporating the CCI into her career counseling sessions, she was able to create a “comprehensive picture of her current life situation and the direction it should take” (Taber et al., 2011, p. 285), which assisted her in making a decision between the two tracks.

Even though researchers have considered different aspects of the Career Construction Interview (CCI; Savickas 1998, 2002, 2009, 2011a), there is a lack of research focusing on the personal experiences of the participants who engage in the CCI process (Rehfuss, Cosio, & Del
Corso, 2011). Furthermore, there are no studies that have considered the personal perspectives of undecided college students who use the CCI in their personal major exploration and career development. Since many career counselors on college campuses are still learning how to use qualitative approaches such as the CCI and mainly are utilizing quantitative career assessments (Taber et al., 2011), like the Strong Interest Inventory (2004) and TypeFocus (Wood, 1997), research needs to be conducted to better understand how a qualitative career assessment such as the CCI can add meaning for undecided students’ assessment process, major selection, and overall career development.

**Purpose of this Study**

The purpose of this research study was to examine undecided freshmen college students’ lived experiences of the Career Construction Interview (CCI; Savickas 1998, 2002, 2009, 2011a) process after they had completed both the Typefocus (Wood, 1997) and Strong Interest Inventory (SII; 2004) in their Academic and Planning course at their large southeastern university. Research questions included the following: (a) what are the lived experiences of undecided freshmen college students who go through the Career Construction Interview (CCI; Savickas 1998, 2002, 2009, 2011a) process and (b) what aspects of the CCI prove to be most and least helpful to students within the context of the interview and interpretation process (Rehfuss, Del Corso, et al., 2011). Undecided freshmen students who were taking a university Academic and Career Planning course were the participants for this study and received extra credit for completing the CCI individually with the researcher. While the CCI was the central assessment of this research study, the Strong Interest Inventory (2004) and the TypeFocus (Wood, 1997) assessment, which were also interpreted in the career courses’ classroom settings, acted as complementary assessments in the analysis of the students’ CCIs. Since there was no published
research study focusing on undecided college students’ lived experience of the CCI process and how this process influences their major and career exploration, this study added to the literature in terms of how the CCI can be assessed in new and creative ways (Barclay & Wolff, 2012). Finally, this study provided a fresh perspective of how career counselors can utilize this tool with undecided college students as they explore major and career options in the freshmen year of their collegiate experience.

**Research Tradition and Theoretical Orientation**

A phenomenological research approach was the most ideal methodology for this study because the focus was on the lived experiences of undecided students who engage in the Career Construction Interview (CCI; Savickas 1998, 2002, 2009, 2011a) process. Phenomenology as a qualitative research approach complements counseling research since counseling as a professional practice naturally focuses on individuals’ lived experiences (Hays & Singh, 2012; Hays & Wood, 2011). Since the population being studied included freshmen college students who had indicated that they were undecided with their major, a phenomenological research design with in-depth interviews was used to more fully understand the participants’ lived experiences of the CCI process (Hays & Wood, 2011).

Constructivism is a qualitative research tradition that “assumes that reality is socially constructed, that is, there is no single, observable reality” (Merrian, 2009, p. 8). Where there is no one definition for the term constructivism (Cottone, 2007), constructivists “believe that individuals seek understanding of the world in which they live and work” (Creswell, 2014, p. 8). Researchers who use this tradition “seek to construct knowledge through social interactions as well as to understand how individuals construct knowledge” (Hays & Singh, 2012, p. 41). Using
this type of research tradition, participants’ experiences were analyzed to better understand the particular situation being observed (Creswell, 2014).

Within this constructivist framework, career construction theory encourages career counselors to have multiple perspectives in regards to their clients’ experiences, and from these experiences, collaborate with them to address their career related needs and goals (Savickas, 2011b). Career development, through the lens of career construction theory, considers the “what, how, and why of career decision” (Glavin & Berger, 2012, p. 185) and encourages individuals to explore common themes in their lives, promoting insight as to potential career decisions (Cardoso, 2012). Three main constructs of this theoretical framework include “vocational personality, career adaptability, and life themes” (Glavin & Berger, p. 185) that help individuals make meaning, define purpose, and create their own direction in life (Busacca, 2007). Through the utilization of this career construction theory, millennial college students who were undecided created meaning and explored purpose in their lives as they reflected upon the meaning and themes that surfaced from their lived experiences (Hartung & Taber, 2008; Ng & Gossett, 2013).
CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

A career journey, for many undecided college students, can seem like an unending road, leading in many unknown directions towards an invisible destination. Traditional aged freshmen college students arrive on their college campuses and are immediately bombarded by fellow students, staff, faculty, friends, and family members who ask them, “What is your major and what do you want to do with it?” Many undecided students become overwhelmed with this question and feel lost in how to begin the search for a major and career fit (Schaub, 2012). Understanding the specific perspectives and needs of undecided students reinforces the importance of how career counselors use resources such as career assessments to encourage self-awareness and major and career exploration.

In order to provide support for the research questions, which included (a) what are the lived experiences of undecided freshmen college students who go through the Career Construction Interview (CCI; Savickas 1998, 2002, 2009, 2011a) process and (b) what aspects of the CCI prove to be most and least helpful to students within the context of the interview and interpretation process (Rehfuss, Del Corso, et al., 2011), a review of the literature was essential. The literature reviewed for this study focused on the following topics: (a) millennial college students, (b) career assessments, and (c) combining the career construction interview with quantitative assessments. Particular attention was given to the potential for using the CCI in combination with more traditional quantitative assessments to promote meaning making. The purpose of this literature review was to highlight the career development challenges of millennial undecided college students and to explore how career assessments, such as the CCI, could be
used in conjunction with quantitative assessments to support them in their major and career selection.

**Millennial College Students**

Within society, generations of individuals entering the workforce are defined by characteristics they have in common based on shared experiences of time and space. Baby boomers and millennials, for instance, are the largest generations in the history of the United States (Bauchamp & Barnes, 2015). With baby boomers currently retiring, the 21st century world of work is changing as they are being replaced by an increasing number of millennials entering the workforce each year (Ordun & Karaeminogullari, 2013). While baby boomers were born between 1946 and 1964 (Beauchamp & Barnes; Shambora, 2006; Twenge, 2010; Winston & Barnes, 2007), millennials were born between 1980 and 2000 (De Hauw & De Vos, 2010) and are bringing new challenges and expectations to employers as they enter the workforce (Ng & Gossett, 2013; Payment, 2008).

Similar to the baby boomer generation that was termed “the ‘me’ generation” (Winston & Barnes, 2007, p. 139), millennials are sometimes described as a generation that exhibits narcissistic attitudes and overconfidence in their abilities (Twenge, 2013). These characteristics may explain why many millennials have a tendency to change jobs frequently (Payment, 2008; Twenge & Campbell, 2008) considering that they “want it all and want it now, in terms of good pay and benefits, rapid advancement, work/life balance, interesting and challenging work, and making a contribution to society” (Ng et al., 2010, p. 282). Even though many millennials have ideal expectations when it comes to their personal career goals and may change careers multiple times (i.e., 15-20 times) (Payment, 2008), they intently search for meaningful and fulfilling work
to accomplish (Dixon, Mercado, & Knowles, 2013; Ng & Gossett, 2013; Ng et al., 2010; Twenge, 2010; Twenge & Campbell, 2008).

In the workplace, millennials in general strive for good pay and rapid advancement, value intentional training and development, expect and pursue work/life balance, and appreciate casual work environments where informal attire is accepted (De Hauw & De Vos, 2010; Ng et al., 2010; Twenge & Campbell, 2008). While employers may find some of these millennial expectations and values to be unrealistic, they also appreciate the fact that these young professionals have the ability to think creatively, are hard workers and multi-taskers, and bring a technical expertise, skill sets in which many from previous generations are not as proficient (Dixon et al., 2013; Shragay & Tziner, 2011). Since many of the careers that will be available in 50 years have not yet been invented, it will be essential that millennials and generations to follow be able to quickly adapt to the constant changes and additions to the world of work (Glavin & Berger, 2012; Nikirk, 2009; Savickas, 2012). Overall, the millennial generation has the potential to powerfully impact American society as a whole with their enthusiasm, inclusiveness of others, dedication to causes that align with their interests, and striving towards meaningful and purposeful employment (Dixon et al.; Milliron, 2008; Payment, 2008).

Career Development Challenges of Millennial Undecided College Students

Millennial college students, especially during their freshman year, often are indecisive in their choice of major and career path, which may hinder them in their overall academic and career development (Lepre, 2007; Tirpak & Schlosser, 2011). An “undecided” college student can be characterized as an individual who does not have a clear idea of what they would prefer to study when entering their college setting (Mayhall & Burg, 2002; Starling & Miller, 2011). Researchers estimate that approximately 50% to 75% of students are undecided about their major
and career path when they enter college as freshmen (Cuseo, 2005; Gordon & Steele, 2003). Even though it is not uncommon for freshmen college students to arrive on their college campuses confused about which majors to consider, many students experience anxiety, confusion, and frustration in this decision-making process (Galilee-Belfer, 2012; Starling & Miller, 2011). The following sections focus on the factors which may contribute to these challenges including: (a) experiencing parental pressures, (b) lacking real world experience, (c) having too many interests, (d) feeling pressured from universities to choose a major early in their college experience, (e) having to choose a major from an array of options, and (f) facing the inevitable high costs of college.

**Parental pressures to choose a specific major.** Choosing a major is one of the most significant and possibly the first autonomous decision that many college students make when they enter their university setting (Galotti et al., 2006). When entering college as freshmen, many students are continually bombarded with the question, “What are you going to major in?” In particular, parents can have great impact on their children’s major selections, especially if they have an interest or expertise in an area they are recommending (Stater, 2011). For instance, if a parent has majored in education and has worked in education for many years, they may see this as a stable career and encourage their child to pursue a major in education as well. Conversely, a parent who is unhappy with their own career path may steer their child towards a different career path due to their own unhappiness. While it is not uncommon that parents may give input in regards to their child’s major selection, students need to spend time reflecting on their personal values, experiences, interests, and career goals in order to make their own informed decisions (Galotti et al., 2006).
Lack of real world experience. For many college students who have not worked, volunteered, or participated in school related clubs and activities, their lack of experience and exposure to a variety of educational or vocational fields may hinder their ability to choose a major early in their college experience (Gaililee-Belfer, 2012). This lack of experience and exposure causes many students anxiety since they may assume their choice of major will inevitably lead to a specific career path (Thompson & Feldman, 2010), thus creating the emphasis of “choosing the right major” to find the “right career.” While some majors are career track focused, like Accounting or Education, which lead to specific careers, others like English or Political Science are focused more on building a particular skill set that can be transferable to a variety of career settings. Prior to selecting a major, students who have not chosen a particular career path could benefit from considering their interests and skill sets, their previous knowledge of majors and career fields, the time it would take to finish specific degrees, and careers that former alumni in certain majors pursued after graduation (Stater, 2011).

Multipotentiality. The term multipotentiality refers to individuals who have a variety of interests and abilities in multiple areas, which often make it challenging to choose a specific direction (Bloom, Tripp, & Shaffer, 2011; Carduner et al., 2011). Because of the many interests these individuals have cultivated in the past, they struggle with making decisions since they are afraid of abandoning all they have previously learned and experienced (Bloom et al., 2011). For college students who fall in this category, choosing a major is challenging since they believe there are so many options that may fit their unique abilities and interests (Twenge & Campbell, 2008). Many are afraid that in choosing a narrow focus, they will make a mistake, which usually hinders them from making a choice at all (Carduner et al., 2011). Career counselors can support students’ decision-making process by helping them consider broad majors that may encompass
multiple interests and skill sets and also consider how to complement a major with extracurricular activities (Carduner et al., 2011).

**Pressure to decide on a major early in college experience.** As Cuseo (2005) observed, many universities’ policies “push students into making early or premature commitments” (p. 34) to a specific major without understanding the difficulty of the major selection process for millennial freshmen students or the importance of their self-discovery early in their college experience. Many universities today have over 100 majors from which to select, making this decision even more difficult for students who feel pushed to choose from such an expansive list without having time to adequately research the various options that might be a good fit for them (Carduner et al., 2011). Reacting to these initial pressures, many students may make a hasty decision in order to satisfy the demands of their college (Lepre, 2007). While some students’ majors could lead to specific career paths after graduation, creating a linear tie between major and career, it is important that students understand that their career options are not always limited by their choice of major (Bullock-Yowell et al., 2014; Galilee-Belfer, 2012; Montag, Campo, Weissman, Walmsley, & Snell, 2012; Parks, 2011; Porter & Umbach, 2006).

**The cost of college.** The cost of a college education is one of the most significant investments that students will make in their lifetime and is a growing concern among students and their families (Kim, Huang, & Sherraden, 2014; Saks & Shore, 2005; Xu, 2011). For many students, an initial concern is the overall cost of their college tuition, weighing if the actual financial benefits of attending college can be “offset by substantial increases in the cost of attending college” (Schmitt & Boushey, 2012, p. 82). Having increased at triple the rate of inflation, tuition is much higher than it was 30 years ago, and in light of the increased cost of college versus the disproportionate lack of increase in wages, many college graduates wonder if
getting their degree is worth it, as they struggle to secure employment upon graduation (Abel & Deitz, 2014; Khan, 2013; Slaper & Foston, 2013). Almost one-half of current college graduates are carrying large student loan debts and are either unemployed or underemployed, which raises the question of whether a college degree is worth the high price tag (Beaver, 2015; Khan, 2013). While there is a historically high number of students who are pursuing college today in order to obtain a good job, the costs of a college education have continued to rise, averaging over $14,000 per year for 4-year public institutions (Beaver; Ronan, 2005; Schmitt & Boushey, 2012). With these rising costs, many students decide to pay for college through student loans, which leave many students with debt averaging over $21,000 after graduation (Alkandari, 2014; Schmitt & Boushey, 2012).

Paying for college has become a major concern (Kim et al., 2014), especially for those who are undecided in their major or career path. For students who enter undecided, choosing a major too late or changing majors several times may impact the length of time spent in college, thus increasing the overall costs of college (Cuseo, 2005). It is the responsibility of universities to educate their students on the economic realities of the workplace by providing them with information about major specific earnings, debt from student loans, and rate of employment of students post-graduation (Beaver, 2015; Milliron, 2008). Many students, however, remain unaware or naïve of the reality of debt that they will acquire upon graduation as well as how to pay off such debt. With a clear expectation of career paths, undecided students could have a better understanding of how to choose a major that will lay the best foundation for their future career, making attending college a worthwhile endeavor (Stater, 2011).

**Universities’ Response to the Career Development Needs of Undecided Students**
With the many challenges that freshmen college students face, it is beneficial to consider universities’ responses to such challenges. Since a significant number of entering freshmen students are undecided, many universities have supported these students through various interventions as a way of facilitating the major search and selection process (Jurgens, 2000; Lepre, 2007). Some of these interventions include academic courses geared toward career development, career centers that provide a variety of career-related services to students, career counselors who support students through individual counseling appointments, and career assessments, which promote students’ self-awareness.

**Academic courses.** One of the ways that universities support students’ career development is by offering a variety of undergraduate career-related course options (Ledwith, 2014). Parks (2011) discussed how “academic and career planning courses are tools students use to make informed decisions about their academic and professional futures” (p. 2). Many universities have such courses, which were designed to assist students, including undecided students, in their major decision-making process (Jurgens, 2000). These courses may be led by career center staff or taught by university faculty and may focus on career exploration, self-assessment through career assessments, or major and career decision making, as well as job searching strategies (Ledwith, 2014; Thompson & Feldman, 2010).

Research has shown the value and difference such courses make in the career development of undergraduate students by maximizing students’ potential to gain employment after graduation (Parks, 2011; Reddan & Rauchle, 2012; Thompson & Feldman, 2010). For example, Thompson & Feldman (2010) discussed the value of their career development course in that it supported students’ growth in self-awareness, promoted students’ understanding of vocation and how it fit into their lives, aided their identification of majors and careers of interest,
and developed their job search skills including resume writing and interviewing. Similarly, Parks (2011) identified that through his career development course, students were able to identify their career paths and majors of interest earlier as well as remain positive in their attitudes regarding future career decision-making. Universities that promote such career development courses within their curriculum are acknowledging the importance of vocational development and should continue to develop these courses for future generations of college students (Parks, 2011).

**Career centers.** In addition to career-related courses, the university career center is commonly viewed as a positive resource, making a significant impact in college students’ overall career development process as well as quality of life (Choi, Lee, Kim, Kim, Cho, & Lee, 2013; Makela & Rooney, 2014). In recent years, higher education officials have increased their focus on college career services due to factors such as the national economy, governmental policies, parental input, and employer input (Ledwith, 2014). As Schaub (2012) discussed, in light of our changing and demanding “economic climate, the delivery of career services to students is more important than ever” (p. 201). In fact, research has shown that career centers should be at the center of career development on college campuses, assuming a strong mission for counseling and assessment practices (Garis, 2014).

With this growing awareness of the importance of career services, there are new pressures for universities to “provide generalized services to any population, but also to work with academic units to meet the unique needs of many campus subpopulations” (Ledwith, 2014, p. 50), often including the undecided population. Specifically, when assisting the undecided student population, it is critical for career centers and career counselors to provide them with services and resources that encourage exploration of both major and career opportunities
To best support students, universities need to recognize and support their career center staff as leaders in career development programming initiatives especially in regards to resources geared towards helping the undecided student population (Garis, 2014).

**Career counselors.** As Harrington & Long (2012) emphasized, “The most effective components of career/employment counseling are the people who provide it” (p. 89). In the beginning of the 21st century, career counselors are facing new challenges as more and more individuals in need of career development are requesting career counseling (McMahon & Watson, 2012). Today, individuals desire validation and clarification through holistic career counseling, which can help them navigate their personal career development throughout their lifetime (Rehfuss, 2009). Current career counseling best practices involve “instilling in people the ability to think critically, deal with challenges creatively, construct and advise themselves, and make sound decisions” (Maree, 2013, p. 409). Rather than the career counselor being the expert, the counseling process empowers individuals to explore meaning through their personal stories and then make their own decisions about which direction to pursue (Brott, 2004). While the reality of being a competent career counselor is challenging and complex, the need for effective and relevant career counseling on college campuses is a critical issue particularly considering the challenging economy that millennial college students are entering today (Harrington & Long; Pang, Lam, & Toporek, 2013-2014; Schaub, 2012).

Many career counselors have developed a postmodern mindset that considers students’ life themes and the meaning behind those themes (Brott, 2004). This emphasis on helping students narrate and modify their own stories through career counseling is a growing movement that supports students in making meaning out of their lived experiences, which hopefully will lead them towards purposeful careers (Hartung & Taber, 2008; Savickas, 1995; Schultheiss,
In order to assist students in a more holistic way, career counselors are beginning to see the value of both quantitative and qualitative assessments, used individually and in conjunction with each other. To help students develop their own life themes and discover meaning from their experiences, there is a new opportunity to use both traditional quantitative career assessments and more recent qualitative approaches to provide a holistic exploration process for students (McMahon & Watson, 2012).

**Career Assessments**

The practice of using career assessments is not new to the career services field but rather has been long tested and developed for over 100 years (Harrington & Long, 2013; McMahon & Watson, 2012). In 1914, Jesse Davis created the Student Vocational Self-Analysis, which was the first assessment published and was intended for 10th graders in the public school system (Watson & Flamez, 2015). In the following years, other researchers began developing assessment tools to further meet the career development needs of individuals in a changing society and workforce. For instance, in 1927, E. K. Strong first developed the Strong Vocational Interest Blank (Campbell, 1971), which considered individuals’ interests and their relation to occupational activities. Then, in 1943, a mother-daughter team, Isabel Briggs Myers and Katherine C. Briggs developed the Myers Brigg’s Type Indicator (MBTI, 1943, 1976, 1983) assessment, which considered individuals’ personality preferences. Most recently, Dr. Mark Savickas introduced a qualitative career assessment called the Career Construction Interview (CCI; Savickas 1998, 2002, 2009, 2011a), which focuses on individuals’ narratives and how they make meaning from their lived experiences. Using assessments such as these has the potential to help individuals clarify their educational and career related decisions by encouraging them to
explore their identity in terms of their interests, values, skills and personality (Armstrong & Rounds, 2010; Harrington & Long, 2013; Ohler & Levinson, 2012; Schaub, 2012).

Career assessments are a very important element in supporting and guiding students in their personal career development and assisting them in the discovery of satisfying, fulfilling, and purposeful work (Hartung & Taber, 2008; Wood, 2009). Furthermore, career assessments can assist undecided college students who are exploring major and career options by helping them grow in their self-awareness and consider careers and educational paths that might be a good fit for them (Sampson, 2009-2010). To gain a clearer understanding of career assessments, both quantitative and qualitative career assessments are discussed as well as how they can be used together to promote a holistic assessment process for undecided college students as they explore majors and career options (Maree, 2013).

**Quantitative Career Assessments**

For many decades, it has been a common practice for career counselors to use assessments with individuals to help them identify potential careers that match their interests (Savickas & Taber, 2006). Considering the time constraints many college career counselors face, due to the significant number of students versus available career counselors, many may opt for traditional quantitative career assessments when attempting to meet students’ demands (Hirschi & Lage, 2008). Two such quantitative approaches will specifically be discussed including the Strong Interest Inventory (SII, 2004) and the TypeFocus (Wood, 1997) based on the Myers-Briggs (MBTI, 1943, 1976, 1983) typology since they were used by the participants of this study who completed them in their Academic and Career Planning course on their university campus.
**The Strong Interest Inventory.** First developed by E. K. Strong in 1927, the Strong Interest Inventory (SII, 2004) is one of the most widely used quantitative assessments that considers individuals’ interests and personalities and their relation to certain work environments (Donnay et al., 2004; Hirschi & Lage, 2008; Ohler & Levinson, 2012). Based on John Holland’s RIASEC typology (Holland, 1959, 1966, 1973, 1985, 1997), the SII considers preferred environments by examining individuals’ interests that correspond to the six RIASEC themes: Realistic, Investigative, Artistic, Social, Enterprising, and Conventional (Bullock et al., 2009-2010; Glavin & Savickas, 2011; Gottfredson & Johnstun, 2009; Huang & Healy, 1997). The six RIASEC themes are arranged around the exterior of a hexagon with the most closely related themes next to each other (see Appendix G) (Gottfredson & Johnstun, 2009). Ohler & Levinson (2012) described each of the six types as follows: **Realistic** refers to individuals who enjoy hands on work activities such as utilizing tools, operating machinery/equipment, and prefer practical and realistic work environments; **Investigative** individuals enjoy solving mathematical or scientific problems, are intellectual and precise, and are research oriented; **Artistic** indicates those who appreciate esthetics, prefer creative activities, value self-expression, and enjoy independent work environments; **Social** individuals desire to help people through their work and problem solving, enjoy teaching or counseling environments, and are trustworthy and friendly; **Enterprising** individuals enjoy leadership positions, opportunities to persuade or sell to others, and are ambitious and energetic; and finally, **Conventional** individuals appreciate orderly and structured environments, prefer to follow a plan, and enjoy working with documents, numbers, and record keeping.

The main assumptions of Holland’s theory include the following: (a) people can be characterized within the six personality types, (b) there are a six main work environments which
need to be considered, and (c) people will seek out work environments that align with their interests, skills, and attitudes in regards to certain occupations (Ohler & Levinson, 2012). When individuals are able to determine their preferred work environments, among these six themes, they will gain a higher level of job satisfaction when working in areas that are most congruent to their interests and personality (Schaub, 2012). While individuals are more complex than just one type, individuals do have a dominant combination of the types, leading to a top two or three letter code (i.e., AES – Artistic, Enterprising, Social) (Chauvin et al., 2010; Reardon & Bullock, 2004). For many years, these codes have been compared to individuals working in a variety of career fields who have found satisfaction with their occupations. Counselors can help individuals explore occupations that are congruent to their particular code, identify personal strengths and weaknesses, consider educational requirements, and learn about detailed work activities, salaries, career projections, and work environments that align with those occupations (Ohler & Levinson, 2012; Savickas & Taber, 2006). For example, if someone has a code of AES, one of the occupations matched with this code is Music Director. Even if an individual is not interested in this particular job, it is helpful to explore the job’s skill sets, type of education required, work activities, environment, etc., in order to better understand the potential traits that are congruent with the individual’s occupational interests (Ohler & Levinson, 2012).

Specifically, choosing a major and career path can be facilitated by utilizing the Strong Interest Inventory (SII, 2004) with undecided students and helping them understand their top two or three RIASEC codes and how those relate to certain work environments (Coulter-Kern et al., 2013; Ohler & Levinson, 2012; Porter & Umbach, 2006). While the SII has been used for many decades, it is still relevant to the changing 21st century world of work and provides a solid
foundation for helping individuals explore educational and vocational options (Bullock et al., 2009-2010; Savickas & Taber, 2006).

**The TypeFocus.** The TypeFocus (Wood, 1997) is based on the typology of the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI, 1943, 1976, 1983) and was used by students who participated in this research study. The MBTI typology was founded upon Carl Jung’s personality research and developed by a mother-daughter team, Isabel Briggs Myers and Katherine C. Briggs (Kennedy & Kennedy, 2004). The MBTI typology is one of the most widely utilized personality inventory models applied within career counseling settings today (Atay, 2012; Cooper, Knotts, McCord, & Johnson, 2012; Schaub, 2012). As a quantitative assessment, this typology is based on four dichotomous scales, which include *Extroversion* versus *Introversion*, *Sensing* versus *Intuition*, *Thinking* versus *Feeling*, and *Judgment* versus *Perception* (Briggs, McCaulley, Quenk, & Myers, 1998; Chauvin et al., 2010; Pulver & Kelly, 2008; Rashid & Duys, 2015). These four scales produce 16 personality types (Briggs et al., 1998; Pinkney, 1983). As Kim and Han (2014) described, Extroversion and Introversion consider where individuals gain their energy. For instance, Extroverts gain energy from the outside world (i.e., time with people) while Introverts gain energy from within (i.e., time alone). Sensing and Intuition refer to how individuals gather information and understand their immediate environments. For example, Sensors prefer tangible, logical facts and data whereas Intuitive types see possibilities and the big picture, as well as interconnections in their surroundings. Thinking and Feeling acknowledge how individuals make decisions. Thinkers are very objective and logical whereas Feelers make decisions based on their values and how those decisions might affect others. Finally, Judging and Perceiving consider how individuals organize their lives. Judgers prefer planned activities, orderly environments, self-discipline, and a future orientation while Perceivers enjoy
spontaneous activities, flexibility, and a present orientation. While this typology considers individuals’ preferences, not absolutes, skills or abilities (Kennedy & Kennedy, 2004), this assessment provides a solid method for assessing personality trait differences and how various traits relate to certain work environments and career fields (Atay, 2012; Schaub, 2012).

Research has indicated that personality actually impacts college major choice and overall satisfaction of the college experience (Porter & Umbach, 2006). Using an assessment like the TypeFocus (Wood, 1997), based on the MBTI typology, would help students to identify where they gain their energy, increase awareness of their communication styles, consider the various ways of making decisions, and encourage them to explore how to incorporate their preferences into work environments (Kennedy & Kennedy, 2004). When career counselors use this assessment tool with students who are in the major selection process, it promotes students’ awareness of career environments that may be a good fit for them as well as ones in which they may excel (Kennedy & Kennedy, 2004; Pulver & Kelly, 2008).

Quantitative assessments, such as the Strong Interest Inventory (SII; 2004) and the TypeFocus (Wood, 1997), are established methods frequently used in career counseling settings (Armstrong & Rounds, 2010). These types of assessments provide a more objective perspective of the individual, even though inherently, it is somewhat subjective since the individual taking the assessment is choosing their responses (Del Corso & Rehfuss, 2011; Schultheiss, 2005). While these assessments can be very useful to individuals who are exploring majors and careers, they are not able to capture the story and meaning of an individual’s life (Del Corso & Rehfuss, 2011). Rather, qualitative assessments assert that the counseling relationship and individuals’ personal reflections on their experiences are also valuable elements of the career assessment process since they provide for a holistic framework, which “reflects the interwoven nature of life
roles and the realities of people’s lives” (Schultheiss, 2005). Researchers suggest that career counselors utilize qualitative career assessment approaches, in addition to quantitative approaches, in order to promote individuals’ exploration of life themes, which may align with specific academic and career related areas (Brott, 2004; Maree, 2013; Whitson & Rahardia, 2005).

**Qualitative Career Assessments**

In contrast to the quantitative career assessment approach where the career counselor is the expert, facilitating the interpretation of students’ assessment results, qualitative assessment approaches encourage the participation of students throughout the assessment process (Hirschi & Lage, 2008). Even though qualitative career assessment approaches have not received as much attention in the literature and may be time consuming, they are theoretically based and promote a collaborative counseling relationship between the individual and their career counselor (McMahon, Patton, & Watson, 2003; McMahon & Patton, 2002; McMahon & Watson, 2012; Schultheiss, 2005; Whitson & Rahardia, 2005). These theoretically based interventions are grounded in constructivism, which “focuses on meaning making, and the constructing of social and psychological worlds through individual, cognitive processes” (Schultheiss, 2005, p. 382).

**Career construction theory.** Based in constructivism, career construction theory (Savickas, 1998, 2005, 2011a) helps “individuals develop a cohesive identity, adapt with their environment, and construct” (Del Corso & Rehfuss, 2011, p. 335) their career story. This theoretical perspective was developed to address the economic, work, and life changes in an ever-evolving 21st century global society, which has launched instability, uncertainty and continual change into the world of work (Busacca, 2007; Glavin & Berger, 2012). Busacca (2007) discussed how through the career construction theoretical perspective, “counselors can
examine what people prefer to do, how individuals cope with vocational development tasks…and why individuals choose to fit work into their lives in specific ways” (p. 57). When individuals begin imagining their life direction, they are able to design and build the type of lives and careers that they find most satisfactory (Savickas, 2009). From a constructionist perspective, “career denotes putting oneself in a non-static situation that forces one to reinterpret past memories, present experiences and future aspirations” (Di Fabio, 2012, p. 717). Overall, career construction theory focuses on helping clients make meaning in their lives from their lived experiences and assisting them in the construction of their career and life journeys (Busacca, 2007; Hartung & Taber, 2008; Del Corso & Rehfuss; Maree, 2013; Savickas, 2011b; Scholl & Cascone, 2010; Schultheiss, 2005).

Career construction theory is a structured approach that engages individuals in strategic and stylistic storytelling and has three central constructs, which include vocational personality, career adaptability, and life themes (Glavin & Berger, 2012; Hartung & Taber, 2008; Savickas, 2011). First, vocational personality refers to information that counselors can gain once the client shares narrative responses, which then can be tied back to individual Holland RIASEC codes (Rehfuss, 2007). Secondly, career adaptability refers to “the resources and tendencies an individual possesses to navigate transitions and make career decisions” (Rehfuss, 2007, p. 73). Finally, life themes are found when both the counselor and client review the client’s narrative and pick out overlapping themes that have emerged. As Rehfuss (2007) indicated, these themes are the “glue that hold all of the stories together” (p. 71) and can provide insight as to why the client has taken particular actions in their career development. Helping clients understand their vocational personality, career adaptability and life themes provides navigation tools clients can use in both present and future decisions regarding their academic and career planning.
Career construction interview. Even though quantitative assessment methods are generally used in career counseling (Taber et al., 2011), in the last few years, qualitative career assessment approaches with both structured and semi-structured interviews have emerged and are becoming a viable option for career counselors to use with their individuals who are exploring academic and career options (Schultheiss, 2005). Based on career construction theory (Savickas, 2011) and Adler’s individual psychology (Adler, 1982), the Career Construction Interview (CCI; Savickas 1998, 2002, 2009, 2011a) is one of the earliest qualitative assessments, empowering individuals to tell their stories through a semi-structured interview approach (Busacca, 2007; Glavin & Berger, 2012; Hartung & Taber, 2008; Obi, 2015; Rehfuss, Del Corso, et al., 2011). The interview includes five questions, outlined in Savickas’ (2015) Life-Design Counseling Manual, which counselors use to help individuals pinpoint life themes, which can then inform both educational and career decisions (Barclay & Wolff, 2012). Questions lead individuals to answer prompts that consider their role models growing up, preferable leisure activities, favorite books, magazines, and films, as well as school subjects (Busacca, 2007; Rehfuss, Del Corso, et al, 2011.). As individuals respond to these questions, they grow in their self-awareness and are able to articulate their interests through story telling (Busacca; McMahon & Watson, 2012; Taber et al., 2011). It is an individual’s ability to tell their own career story that will enable them to facilitate occupational transitions over their lifetime (Obi, 2015).

Millennial college students need empowerment “to construct their future and forge their career paths” (Grier-Reed & Skaar, 2010, p. 42). For this assessment approach to be beneficial and empowering for students, one method recommended by Savickas (1995) is a five-step counseling process, which includes the following: (1) the counselor listens to the student’s stories and identifies potential life theme(s) within them, (2) the counselor discusses the
identified theme(s) with the student, (3) the counselor discusses the theme(s)’ meaning in relation to the student’s indecision, (4) the counselor and student collaboratively explore interests and occupations that complement the student’s theme(s), and (5) both the counselor and student discuss the skills needed to make an educational or career choice. Utilizing this type of constructivist process with undecided college students would be beneficial as they “reconstruct their career stories and infuse their action with career goals fit for a 21st century workplace” (Obi, 2015, p. 219).

When using the Career Construction Interview (CCI; Savickas 1998, 2002, 2009, 2011a) with college students, it is essential that the counselor first establish the relationship with the student (Taber et al., 2011). Counselors initially do this by asking them, “How may I be useful to you?” (Savickas, 2015, p. 16). Rather than focusing on the “helplessness” of the student by asking them how they can “help” them today, counselors focus more on the “usefulness” of counseling services in the career development of the student (Savickas, 2015). Once the counselor has established rapport, they ask the student five question, one at a time, and listen for themes within the student’s narrative (Savickas, 2015).

Savickas outlined the Career Construction Interview (CCI; Savickas 1998, 2002, 2009, 2011a, 2015) questions and process as follows. First, the counselor asks, “Who did you admire when you were growing up?” (p. 28). Counselors look for three role models a student had early in their childhood, preferably from age three to six. These role models can be real individuals, imagined, or fictional characters they admired. In considering the traits of these three role models, this question reveals similarities in the students’ role models and who the student is and who they are also becoming. Considering these traits, both the counselor and student examine how the traits could complement various majors and career fields of interest.
The second question is, “Do you subscribe to any magazines or watch any television shows regularly?” (Savickas, 2015, p. 29). As the student discusses the magazines or television shows they enjoy, counselors are able to help them see their interests that are reflected in these topics. If a student does not regularly watch television or subscribe to magazines, the counselor can pull from other media including websites, newspapers, video games, etc. By helping the student realize their own interests and what draws them towards them, students can gain a greater awareness of how their interests could potentially tie into various majors and career fields.

Third, the counselor asks the student about their “current” favorite story from a book or movie (Savickas, 2015). The student shares a narrative of the movie or book they are currently reading or have enjoyed watching. The counselor should pay attention to the plot of the student’s narrative, which indicates how students may be scripting their own transition in the midst of their major or career exploration process. Savickas (2015) discussed that an individual experiences many life roles and will have many transitions and life scripts throughout their lifetime, and thus, it is important to identify the student’s current script and how they are transitioning into the next phase of their life.

The fourth question is, “What is your favorite saying?” (Savickas, 2015, p. 34). This question elicits a response that may indicate the advice the student gives themselves when facing a challenge. If a student cannot think of their favorite saying, the counselor then asks if they can make one up. As Savickas (2015) explained, a counseling goal when using the CCI is “to have clients hear and respect their own wisdom” (p. 34), which empowers them in their own advice giving when trying to choose an educational or vocational direction.

Finally, the fifth question is, “What are your earliest recollections? I am interested in hearing three stories about things that happened to you when you were three to six years old”
(Savickas, 2015, p. 35). The counselor also asks the student for a description of an imagined photograph as well as a headline for this memory. By examining the student’s past, it can indicate how they deal with the world and present concerns. It is important that the student creates their own meaning from their spoken narratives of past events and experiences their own truth.

Once all five of the questions have been asked, the counselor and student can develop a life script or success formula that encompasses the meaning made from each of the five questions. For example, the life script could look like, “I will be most happy and successful when I am helping and being patient with others, working independently, and have a specific expertise. I like environments such as hospitals or clinics where I can serve others as they recover from injury. The best advice that I can give myself is that the best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others – Gandhi. In particular, I am interested in the field of Physical Therapy and could consider majoring in Exercise and Sports Science, Biology, or Athletic Training.” The completed narrative indicates how the student plans to respond to upcoming challenges as well as how they will make their transition in their next major or career selection.

By encouraging students to tell their unique stories through the Career Construction Interview (CCI; Savickas 1998, 2002, 2009, 2011a), counselors gain the students’ perspective and are able to collaborate with them in developing meaning based on their lived experiences (Brott, 2004; Busacca, 2007; Hartung & Taber, 2008; Maree, 2013). While the counselor listens to the student’s story intently, it is not the counselor’s job to interpret meaning but to encourage the student’s authorship of their own career story, detailing how they would like to progress forward (Savickas, 2011b). Career counselors’ main reasons for using the CCI are to help
students construct life themes, recognize patterns of interests within these themes, and explore how these themes and interests correspond to various educational and career related areas (Barclay & Wolff, 2012; Taber et al., 2011).

Qualitative assessments, like the Career Construction Interview (CCI; Savickas 1998, 2002, 2009, 2011a), can be time consuming and could require multiple sessions with students, which may be a limitation for some career counselors who work regularly with hundreds of students each year (Chope, 2005). Since these assessments are less structured than quantitative assessments, it is important that counselors individualize the qualitative assessment process based on students’ needs and timelines (McMahon & Patton, 2002). When there is a lack of counselor availability compared with student need, McMahon and Patton (2002) recommended that counselors consider conducting qualitative assessments in small group settings, which may facilitate the engagement in this type of assessment for more students on college campuses.

**Combining qualitative and quantitative career assessments.** In the 21st century, there has been a shift in how career counselors use career assessments with individuals, moving away from focusing solely on the job search process and instead supporting individuals in their self-exploration (Brott, 2004). While utilizing quantitative and qualitative career assessments by themselves can support individuals’ personal career development, research has shown that combining quantitative and qualitative approaches promotes a holistic assessment process for individuals as they explore meaning in their lives (Maree, 2013). Because individuals are more complex than their quantitative assessment’s objective results (Taber et al., 2011), “by blending assessment data from both quantitative and qualitative methods, there is a rich array of information that can be woven into the client’s story” (Brott, 2004, p. 190). Additionally, both types of career assessments complement each other in that the strengths and limitations of both
approaches are counterbalanced by the strengths and limitations of the other (Busacca, 2007; Whitson & Rahardia, 2005).

**Combining the career construction interview with quantitative assessments.** When utilizing quantitative assessments such as the TypeFocus (Wood, 1997) and the Strong Interest Inventory (SII; 2004), counselors can incorporate a narrative approach to complement the interpretation of quantitative assessment results (Sangganjanavanich & Milkavich, 2008). For example, since career construction theory focuses on “an individual’s vocational personality, life theme and career adaptability” (Rehfuss, 2007), using the Career Construction Interview (CCI; Savickas 1998, 2002, 2009, 2011a) and Holland’s RIASEC model in conjunction can support individuals in their exploration of their interests and also assist them in navigating work environments that match their interests and personality type (Glavin & Berger, 2012; Hartung & Taber, 2008; Savickas, 2015). For instance, the second question on the CCI asks, “What is your favorite television show, movie, or magazine and why is it your favorite” (Savickas, 2015 p. 29)? If an individual responds that they enjoy *Project Runway* because of the creativity of the designers as well as the designers’ entrepreneurial spirit, the counselor and individual can collaborate together to see the connection between creativity and Artistic (A) as well as an entrepreneurial mindset being similar to Enterprising (E).

Similarly, a counselor could ask an individual how they would feel being in an environment like *Project Runway*, which is people oriented with very little time to be alone. If the individual says that they prefer to be around others because they become very energized by people, this description could lend itself to the Extraversion trait on the Myers Briggs typology. After an individual has considered work environments complementary to their interests and life themes, career counselors can help them construct life themes based on their personal stories.
which give an indication of how they desire to create meaning and mattering within their personal career direction (Glavin & Berger, 2012). Specifically, when using this assessment approach with undecided college students, their confidence and satisfaction may be enhanced as they find meaning in their life themes, providing them with a holistic view of how work fits into the rest of their overall life role development (Busacca, 2007; Hartung & Taber, 2008).

Finally, it is important to note that the career development and assessment process is quite complex considering that it is essential to explore individuals’ lived experiences, personality traits, interests, values, and skills before pursuing a particular direction. While using quantitative and qualitative assessments in conjunction can be very beneficial to individuals exploring educational and vocational options, the actual skill required for these areas of interest also needs to be addressed during the counseling session. For instance, just because an individual might be drawn towards creative environments on a show like Project Runway, that is not an indicator that they have the ability to sew high fashion. Even though looking at an individual’s personality, interests, and values through both quantitative and qualitative approaches can be insightful, it will be necessary to consider their talents and natural abilities as well before helping them to navigate the major and career exploration process.

**Significance of this Study**

While there are still a “multitude of undecided college students, the amount of research conducted on this unique student group has diminished in recent years” (Bullock-Yowell et al., 2014, p. 22) especially around the topic of choosing a major (Porter & Umbach, 2006). Additionally, because millennial undecided students face many challenges when choosing a major and career direction, career counselors need to be intentional about how they integrate quantitative and qualitative career assessment approaches to address students’ unique concerns.
and individual needs (Maree, 2013). Research has indicated that there is a need to better understand the impact of the qualitative career assessments process in undecided students’ career development (McMahon et al., 2003). Using qualitative assessments, such as the Career Construction Interview (CCI; Savickas 1998, 2002, 2009, 2011a), along with quantitative career assessments, including the Strong Interest Inventory (SII; 2004) and TypeFocus (Wood, 1997), based on the Myers Briggs typology, promote a holistic counseling process from which undecided college students can benefit in their major and career exploration.

To better understand the impact of a qualitative assessment such as the Career Construction Interview (CCI; Savickas 1998, 2002, 2009, 2011a) with undecided students, it is beneficial to consider students’ perspectives of using the CCI in their major and career exploration process and to learn about which aspects of the interview and interpretation process are most and least helpful to them (Rehfuss, Del Corso, et al., 2011). By encouraging students to tell their stories, which are prompted by the questions on the CCI, counselors will be able to help students co-construct themes and meaning from their responses, which illuminate objective results from the Strong Interest Inventory (SII; 2004) and TypeFocus (Wood, 1997). For this research study, the CCI was the main focus even though the student participants also completed the SII and the TypeFocus in their Academic and Career Planning course prior to engaging with the CCI. These quantitative assessments were supplementary and used within the counseling process with the students to provide them with a holistic career assessment intervention. Even though these two quantitative assessment results were present when going through students’ CCIs, they were not the focal point of the assessment process and were solely used to highlight certain themes that emerged in students’ CCIs. Combining the quantitative assessments and the CCI could have led to a mixed-method approach to this research study; however, because only
the CCI was the main focus, the researcher chose a qualitative approach. Using a qualitative methodology provided a better understanding of undecided freshmen students’ lived experience of the CCI process, which will increase counselors’ awareness of how this assessment can be used with such student populations as well as fill a gap in the current literature regarding the use of qualitative career assessment approaches on college campuses.
CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

A review of the literature has highlighted challenges many millennial college students face, early in their collegiate experience, in both their academic and career development, as well as the ways in which university career center staff are addressing those challenges. Additionally, the combination of quantitative and qualitative career assessments was discussed since this combination provides a holistic perspective of how work fits into students’ overall life role development (Hartung & Taber, 2008). Furthermore, the Career Construction Interview (CCI; Savickas 1998, 2002, 2009, 2011a), which is based on career construction theory (Savickas, 1998, 2005, 2011a), is one type of qualitative career assessment process and was reviewed as to how it could potentially address the career development needs of undecided freshmen college students who are exploring majors and careers. Based on a research suggestion by Rehfuss, Del Corso et al. (2011), this research study focused on the lived experience of undecided freshmen college students who participated in the CCI process and which aspects of the CCI proved to be most and least meaningful to them within the context of the interview and interpretation process. Prior to going through the CCI, these students also completed the TypeFocus (Wood, 1997) and the Strong Interest Inventory (SII; 2004) in their Academic and Career Planning course at their university. In order to gain a clearer perspective of the lived experiences of undecided freshmen college students who engage in the CCI process, this research study was framed in the qualitative research tradition of phenomenology.

Rationale for a Qualitative Approach

Within the field of counseling, there has been criticism concerning the use of qualitative research. Unlike quantitative approaches, which have been conducted for quite some time,
qualitative research designs are not as well defined or as utilized by researchers (Yilmaz, 2013). Even though researchers need to consider these criticisms, qualitative research approaches are not new within the counseling profession and are growing in popularity (Berrios & Lucca, 2006; Ponterotto, Mathew, & Raughley, 2013). Considering the value of relationship development within the field of counseling, especially between counselors and clients, qualitative approaches provide a similar link between counselors and participants and grant a space where the researcher can be engaged with participants and their stories (Berrios & Lucca, 2006; Ponterotto et al., 2013; Fassinger & Morrow, 2013). Overall, qualitative research methods could be a solution for researchers who are looking more for depth of experience rather than numerical explanations (Gelo, Braakman, & Benetka, 2008).

Qualitative research specifically focuses on process and considers how individuals understand and make meaning from their lived experiences (Atieno, 2009; Bourke, 2014; Yeh & Inman, 2007). Key characteristics of a qualitative approach include the following: (a) research conducted in a natural setting; (b) researcher as a key instrument; (c) multiple sources of data collected; (d) inductive and deductive data analysis; (e) focus on participants’ meanings; (f) understanding of an emergent design; (g) use of reflexivity; and (h) provision of a holistic account (Creswell, 2007). Merriam (2009) explained, “The overall purposes of qualitative research are to achieve an understanding of how people make sense out of their lives, delineate the process (rather than the outcome or product) of meaning-making, and describe how people interpret what they experience” (p. 14). Also, it is essential to note that the researcher’s role is to explore the participants’ worldviews and not act as a subject matter expert on the topic being explored (Parks, 2011). Using a qualitative design was the best approach for this study and
enabled the author to interpret the meaning students made from the phenomenon being addressed.

**Phenomenological Paradigm**

In order to better understand the lived experiences of undecided freshmen college students, a phenomenological approach was utilized for this study. Phenomenology, started by Edmund Husserl in the early 20th century (Converse, 2012; Shaw & Connelly, 2012; Husserl, 1952), is the research tradition that aims to discover the meaning of individuals’ lived experiences in order to shed light on a particular topic (Hays & Singh, 2012; Hays & Wood, 2011). Researchers use this research tradition to move away from their own understanding of a phenomenon in order to experience its pure essence and explore the reality of individuals’ lived experiences (Converse, 2012; Hays & Wood, 2011; Merriam, 2009; Tuohy, Cooney, Dowling, Murphy, & Sixsmith, 2013).

Researchers who adopt a phenomenological approach are tasked with collecting in-depth interviews from multiple individuals who share a similar experience; considering the participants’ perspectives, rather than their own; and providing rich, thick description of the phenomenon being explored (Creswell, 2007; Hays & Singh, 2012; Merriam, 2009). While thin description refers to written details that are inadequate and infer meaning, thick description provides a complete, literal, detailed account of the phenomenon being investigated (Hays & Singh, 2012; Merriam, 2009). Since the population being studied included students who were freshmen in college who indicated that they were undecided with their major selection, I chose to use a phenomenological research design so I could more clearly understand their lived experiences and personal perspectives of a qualitative career assessment approach (Hays & Singh, 2012; Hays & Wood, 2011). I was hopeful that the data would inform career counselors
how to best utilize constructive career assessments, such as the Career Construction Interview (CCI; Savickas 1998, 2002, 2009, 2011a), with undecided freshmen students on their college campuses.

**Theoretical Framework**

In order to set the stage for this research study, it was first essential to discuss the study’s theoretical framework, which is the “underlying structure, the scaffolding or frame” (Merriam, 2009). As a theoretical framework, constructivism considers how researchers and individuals construct knowledge from the world around them (Hays & Singh, 2012). Qualitative career assessments are specifically based on constructivism and focus on “how individuals construct their own ideas about their worlds as they try to make sense out of their real-life experiences” (Gysbers, 2006, p. 97). When used in career counseling settings, constructivism has the potential to empower students as they make decisions regarding their future career paths (Grier-Reed & Skaar, 2010). In this research study, I identified the need to intentionally support freshmen college students who were still undecided in their major and career directions. Therefore, a constructivist foundation was utilized in order to explore the lived experiences of undecided freshmen students who participated in the Career Construction Interview (CCI; Savickas 1998, 2002, 2009, 2011a) process. Based on this constructivist foundation and using a qualitative research approach, phenomenology, this study focused on the following two research questions: (1) What are the lived experiences of undecided freshmen college students who participate in the CCI process and (2) which aspects of the CCI prove to be most and least meaningful to students within the context of the interview and interpretation process (Rehfuss, Del Corso, et al., 2011)?
Participants and Sampling Method

In order to identify potential participants for this phenomenological research study, it was essential that I select individuals who had a direct experience with the phenomenon being explored (Hays & Wood, 2011). I utilized a purposeful sampling approach, criterion sampling (Singh & McKleroy, 2011), which includes “participants who are selected because they meet an important, predetermined criterion” (Hays & Singh, 2012, p. 170). I established the following five predetermined criteria: (1) student had not yet identified/chosen an academic major, (2) student was currently a freshmen in college, (3) student was willing to participate in both the Career Construction Interview (CCI; Savickas 1998, 2002, 2009, 2011a) and follow-up interview two weeks later, (4) student had participated in classroom assessment interpretations of the TypeFocus (Wood, 1997) and Strong Interest Inventory (SII; 2004) with a career counselor, and (5) student was currently enrolled in an Academic and Career Planning course at their university. To recruit students who met these criteria, I developed a criteria questionnaire, which also included a description of my research study (see Appendix A).

To reach this specific undecided freshmen student population who met the criteria, I established a relationship with the coordinator of the Academic and Career Planning course, who also taught one section of the course, the faculty member who supervised the coordinator, and the three other teachers who also taught sections of this course. The Academic and Planning Course was specifically designed to support students as they made academic and career related decisions early in their collegiate experience. During the fall semester when I collected my data, there were four sections of this course. I chose this course specifically because it attracted many freshmen undecided students who were still considering their major selection and who also would go through both the TypeFocus (Wood, 1997) and Strong Interest Inventory (SII; 2004) as
part of the course. Rather than randomly recruiting undecided freshmen students from the general student body population who may or may not be interested in their career development, I decided to specifically recruit students from this Academic and Career Planning course since these students showed interest in learning and growing in their personal academic and career development by enrolling in this course.

I hold a career counseling position within the large southeast university’s career center, where this research study took place, and specifically focus on the career development of undecided students within my counseling role. While this Academic and Career Planning course is taught in an academic department at my university, career counselors such as myself present in the course sections on career assessments. Students complete both the Typefocus (Wood, 1997) and the Strong Interest Inventory (SII; 2004) independently followed by a group interpretation of both assessments, which is led by a career counselor. Early in the fall semester, I presented on these two quantitative assessments in one of the four Academic and Career Planning course sections. Three other career counselors presented in the other three class sections, and each of us used the same PowerPoint presentations to convey the information to students. After the classroom interpretations concluded and my research study was approved through the institutional review board (IRB), the coordinator of these courses and I determined a time for me to come to each of the four course sections and present my research study to the entire classes of students with the anticipation of recruiting freshmen undecided students to volunteer to participate in my research study. These short presentations of my research study within the classrooms occurred in mid-fall.

In these four classroom presentations, which lasted on average 10 minutes, I used a script (see Appendix B), which gave the overall description of my study as well as outlined the criteria
to participate. This script also included information about the incentive students would receive if they participated in the research study. In addition to the Career Construction Interview (CCI; Savickas 1998, 2002, 2009, 2011a) being another career assessment method students could utilize in their personal major selection and career development, the coordinator and I decided that students who volunteered to participate in both the CCI and the additional interview for this research study would get extra credit for the course. The instructor had already created alternate options in which students could gain extra credit, so for those students who did not identify as undecided freshmen or want to participate in this study, there were options for them to gain extra credit as well. Regardless of whether a student received extra credit for participation in this study, all students were given the opportunity to make an appointment with me to go through the CCI to continue developing their academic and career planning.

After reading the script to each of the classes, I provided each student with a hard copy of the criterion questionnaire. Students were told to complete the questionnaire, if they met the criteria, and communicate their interest in participating in my research study by sending an image of the completed questionnaire to me by email. I also told the students that they could call me if they had additional questions prior to completing the questionnaire. Upon receipt of each questionnaire, I contacted potential participants by email. There were not any students who sent in their questionnaire who did not meet the questionnaire criteria. Each of the students who sent in their questionnaire qualified and was interested in going through the Career Construction Interview (CCI; Savickas 1998, 2002, 2009, 2011a) process. For students who met the questionnaire criteria, I provided them with further detail about the study, emailed them the informed consent form (see Appendix C) for them to read through and sign, and scheduled their first appointment to go through both their informed consent as well as the CCI. In order to better
understand students’ lived experience of the CCI process, seven undecided freshmen students who volunteered for this research study were interviewed about their experience using the CCI.

I collected data from participants in person at my work site, which is on the university campus and within the campus’ career center. After going through the informed consent form, I spent approximately one hour with each student going through the Career Construction Interview (CCI; Savickas 1998, 2002, 2009, 2011a). Each student went through the CCI process with me and also brought their TypeFocus (Wood, 1997) and Strong Interest Inventory (SII; 2004) results, which acted as supplementary assessments. After students went through the process of the CCI, their one-hour follow-up interviews were also scheduled for two weeks later, which was a recommendation in the literature (Rehfuss, Del Corso, et al., 2011). Once this research study was completed, the findings of the project were shared with each of the participants who desired to know the outcome of the study.

**Ethical Considerations**

As Hays and Singh (2012) explained, “It is ethically imperative that practitioners who conduct research contribute to the knowledge base and improve clients’ lives” (p. 67). In order to uphold ethical considerations, prior to collecting qualitative data, my research plans were reviewed by the institutional review board (IRB) on my college campus (Creswell, 2014). After the IRB approved the research study, informed consent forms were sent to all participants, prior to their involvement in the data collection process. Students brought signed copies of their informed consent to the first meeting when going through the Career Construction Interview (CCI; Savickas 1998, 2002, 2009, 2011a) process. Participating in this qualitative research study was voluntary, and I upheld the privacy of participants’ information throughout the process.
A ethical consideration that I took into account was that my being a career counselor and the main administrator of both the Career Construction Interview (CCI; Savickas 1998, 2002, 2009, 2011a) and the follow-up interview may hinder students’ authenticity when responding to my interview questions. In order to obtain the most authentic answers possible to my questions, I explained to students that there were no right or wrong answers to my questions and that I wanted their true opinions about their experiences using the CCI. While these considerations were put in place, my role in this particular assessment intervention may have hindered authentic responses to some questions during the interview process.

**Career Construction Interview Sessions**

Within a two-week timeframe, I was able to meet with all seven students who participated in the Career Construction Interview (CCI; Savickas 1998, 2002, 2009, 2011a) process. Each session with a student lasted one-hour and focused on all five of the questions posed on the CCI (see Appendix G), which is outlined in the Life-Design Counseling Manual (Savickas, 2015). As students responded to each question, I took notes from their answers, which we reviewed once all five questions were posed. I went question-by-question and guided students through the meaning of each question. While this was a collaborative process, I relied on the students to point out the common themes from their responses, which we eventually plugged into their life script. During the CCI process, we considered their TypeFocus (Wood, 1997) and Strong Interest Inventory (SII; 2004) results when reviewing their themes, however, these assessments were never a main focus of the overall session. They were used as supplementary assessments, which helped clarify the themes created by students. Once all seven
CCI sessions had been completed, I developed interview questions about the overall CCI process, which were posed to students during their follow up interview.

**Development of Interview Questions**

Using a semi-structured interview protocol, I established eight interview questions based on the two research questions being addressed as well as my theoretical framework (see Appendix D). For instance, questions one, two, three, seven and eight stemmed from the constructivist framework that sought to explore the meaning participants made from their experience going through the Career Construction Interview (CCI; Savickas 1998, 2002, 2009, 2011a) process. In addition, questions four, five, and six sought participants’ perspectives of the CCI as well as their major exploration process, attempting to answer the second research question. This semi-structured interview style allowed me to have flexibility in how I asked questions rather than asking questions in a rigid manner (Hays & Singh, 2012). For this study, I posed all eight questions to each of the seven students and had the flexibility to vary how the questions were asked based on what the interviewees had previously stated.

**Interview Procedure**

After students had completed the Career Construction Interview (CCI; Savickas 1998, 2002, 2009, 2011a) process with me, they then participated in a follow-up, in-person interview, two weeks later. When the students arrived for their interviews, I reminded them of their completed informed consent document (see Appendix C). At the beginning of each interview, I went over my interview protocol (see Appendix D), explaining to participants that their interviews would remain confidential and used only for the purposes of this research study. Then, I explained the semi-structured interview format and also gave them a brief background of the overall research study. The interviews were scheduled for one hour; however, extra time was
added to interviews in case they extended past the one-hour timeframe. The length of each interview averaged 25 minutes since many students did not provide lengthy responses to my questions. Once I finished asking all of the interview questions, I inquired if the students had any additional questions or comments. I also informed and explained to them about member checking, which included students checking completed transcripts of their interviews once I had completed transcription. When the students’ interviews were complete, I informed the course coordinator of the students who participated in the research study so that they could receive extra credit for their class.

**Data Management**

All of the interviews were recorded as digital sound files with the use of an iPad app called ProVoice Record and an iPhone app called iTalk. ProVoice was mainly used since it had a function to slow down the recorded voice to facilitate transcription. iTalk was also used as a backup recording. After the seven interviews concluded, I transcribed each interview verbatim. All audio files and transcriptions were kept secure on my locked, personal computer until the research study concluded.

**Data Analysis**

To facilitate data analysis, I utilized Creswell’s (2007) six-step structure for analyzing the data. First, I organized and prepared the data for analysis by gathering all seven of the completed transcripts, the contact summary sheets, which highlighted my interactions with each student, and my reflective journal. Secondly, I reviewed all the data by slowing reading through each transcript to get a sense of the overall conversation. Thirdly, I started coding all of the data by typing notes in the margins of each transcript with themes, key words, and phrases that offered insight into students’ experiences. Fourthly, I incorporated coding, which is a method used in
phenomenological data analysis (Yeh & Inman, 2007). Coding represents a four-step process, which includes the following actions: (1) bracketing the author’s biases; (2) looking for nonrepetitive and nonoverlapping comments made by the participants; (3) exploring the meaning and depth of the participants’ experiences; and (4) identifying any meanings or tensions (Hays & Wood, 2011). To help organize the codes, I used a table in Word to separate the codes and also color-coded the table to be more visible. Fifthly, I advanced how the description and themes would be represented in the qualitative narrative by pulling out direct quotes from the participants’ transcripts. Finally, I made an interpretation of the findings by considering the themes that emerged and how they related to the experiences of the student participants.

In order to have a thorough understanding of participants’ lived experiences of the Career Construction Interview (CCI; Savickas 1998, 2002, 2009, 2011a) process, I incorporated a research team into my data analysis. My research team consisted of my dissertation chair, as well as two other doctoral students, one who was in my doctoral cohort and another student in a different doctoral program who was also doing research on the CCI. Specifically for this research study, my research team and I used consensus coding in order to explore the meaning of each participant interview. Consensus coding supports the identification of meaningful aspects of each interview from different perspectives and co-creates new understanding among research team members of the phenomenon being researched (Hays & Singh, 2012).

Once I had initially reviewed the seven transcripts, I sent three of the seven transcripts to my two doctoral research team members, and they began the same coding process individually. After initially coding the three transcripts myself, by bracketing my biases and making notations in the margins of participants’ transcripts, I received my research team member’s coded transcripts by email and was able to discuss their observations individually with them, one by
phone and the other in person. During both of these interactions, we discussed the operational definitions of the codes (Hays & Singh, 2012). After completing this process, I created a codebook, using a table in Word, which contained 15 codes and definitions of each code. The 15 codes included (1) relationship between expectation and satisfaction, (2) personalization, (3) self-awareness, (4) connecting to the past, (5) authenticity and depth, (6) verbalizing and interpersonal connection to the counselor, (7) response process, (8) right answer, (9) consistent themes, (10) students’ perspectives of the counselor, (11) counselor’s perspective of students’ CCIs, (12) most enjoyable question, (13) most difficult question, (14) quantitative versus qualitative career assessments, and (15) time. After identifying these codes, I incorporated the process called horizontalization to identify nonrepetitive, nonoverlapping statements in participants’ transcripts (Hays & Singh, 2012). As I went through participants’ statements, I matched each quote with individual codes as I identified specific meaning within participants’ descriptions of their lived experiences of the CCI process. Once the horizontalization process was completed, I discussed both the codebook and the themes that were identified in the horizontalization process with my dissertation chair, and we were able to identify five main themes which included (1) relationship between expectation and satisfaction, (2) personalization, (3) self-awareness, (4) connection to the past, and (5) authenticity and depth. We also discussed that the other codes had relevance to the overall CCI process and would be discussed as observations that participants made from their lived experience using the CCI.

**Research Data**

In addition to the data collected from students’ interviews, I also incorporated the other two assessment results that participants completed in their Academic and Career Planning course, the TypeFocus (Wood, 1997) (i.e., MBTI typology) and Strong Interest Inventory (SII;
2004). These traditional assessments were considered in combination with the qualitative career assessment results to provide a holistic perspective of students’ personalities and interests. While students had participated in a group interpretation of their assessments two months prior to taking the Career Construction Interview (CCI; Savickas 1998, 2002, 2009, 2011a), most students had forgotten their results and what they had indicated, thus allowing the CCI to remind them of their types on these two quantitative assessments. For example, when considering one of the participant’s themes that stemmed from a question on the CCI about their interests, we compared the CCI theme to their SII results to see if the themes in both were similar or dissimilar. Likewise, when a participant was discussing personality traits, which surfaced from a question on the CCI, we were able to identify how that trait resembled their TypeFocus type. While the TypeFocus and the SII were not used thoroughly in conjunction with the CCI, they were incorporated when appropriate to draw attention to particular themes that participants found meaningful in their CCI results.

**Establishing Trustworthiness**

Trustworthiness in qualitative research considers “the authenticity and consistency of interpretations grounded in data” (Yen & Inman, 2007, p. 386). Asserting that multiple truths are possible, an interpretivist/postmodern lens was used in this phenomenological research project in order to reveal truths about the phenomenon that are identified through each participant’s interview (Hays & Singh, 2012). During the data collection and analysis, I established trustworthiness by incorporating many strategies into the review process (Hays & Singh, 2012). First, I used a contact summary profile (see Appendix E) for each participant, which considered the main issues and themes that were apparent in both the Career Construction Interview (CCI; Savickas 1998, 2002, 2009, 2011a) process as well as the follow up interviews,
discrepancies if any, as well as other salient information worth mentioning. Secondly, I incorporated reflective journaling to document my personal experience of interviewing these participants as well as my personal biases (Hays & Singh, 2012). Finally, I integrated member checking into my coding process by sending each participant their transcript and asking for feedback if they wanted to change anything they said during the interview in order to ensure accuracy (Hays & Singh, 2012).

**The Role of the Researcher**

Since a researcher’s bias impacts the research process, it is essential that researchers understand their positionality prior to engaging in research (Bourke, 2014). Different from quantitative research where the researcher is detached from the data and mainly plays an investigative role, in qualitative research, the researcher is the main instrument and thus should examine their gender, race, class, socioeconomic status and educational background, which may impact their research process (Atieno, 2009; Bourke, 2014; Szyjka, 2012). As a White, female, middle class, and graduate level educated individual, I needed to be aware of my biases in terms of working with diverse college students who may come from different backgrounds than myself.

I grew up in a homeschool environment, from Kindergarten through eleventh grade, and had the opportunity to explore many of my interests; however, when I arrived at college, I was an anxious, undecided student, unable to make a decision about my major selection. In light of my lingering confusion and frustration, I decided to meet with a career counselor on my college campus. We went through one quantitative career assessment, and he also allowed me to share my story and interests with him. From these exchanges, I was able to prioritize my interests and was able to narrow them down, arriving at my top choices for one major and three minors.
While I may have started my college experience as an undecided student, I ended up graduating with my Bachelor of Arts degree, with honors, having studied many of my areas of interest.

Many years later, after having assumed a role as a career consultant in a higher education setting, I once again saw the complexity of the major selection process with many undecided students I was serving. In addition to my personal experience and focus on undecided students in my career, I was also interested in the role career assessment plays in an individual’s career development process. From the time I was in high school and took the Strong Interest Inventory (SII; 2004) and the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI, 1943, 1983), assessments have always been a lingering and growing interest for me. I have always found it interesting that through research and quantitative measures, an assessment, such as the SII or MBTI, could pair individuals with careers and/or majors, aligning their interests and personality type. In the midst of my graduate study, I was also introduced to qualitative career assessments, such as the Career Construction Interview (CCI; Savickas 1998, 2002, 2009, 2011a). The realization that assessment could also occur through story telling further opened my eyes to new ways of helping students who were undecided in their major and career exploration.

First, in order to be more aware of my personal biases, it was essential that I, having been an undecided freshman student in college, be cautious and remain an observer of the data explored while not assuming anything based on my own experiences. Second, I acted as the career consultant conducting the Career Construction Interview (CCI; Savickas 1998, 2002, 2009, 2011a) with each of the participants as well as the follow up interview for my qualitative research study. For some participants, this may have caused conflict since they might have desired to please me rather than answering honestly about their experience using the CCI. Because this could have been a conflict of interest, it was essential to express to students that this
interview was for research purposes only and that they could answer honestly to each of the interview questions in order to get the best data. Finally, not having utilized the CCI extensively in my career setting, I was aware that my lack of experience might have hindered students’ experiences going through the CCI versus them going through the CCI with a professional who had been using it for many years. Since I am still growing in my ability to take individuals through the CCI process, I chose to follow the instructions of how to properly administer the CCI with my research participants by following Savickas’ (2015) guidelines in his Life-Design Counseling Manual. This research study is the direct result of my passion to help undecided students using both traditional quantitative and newer qualitative career assessment approaches such as the CCI.
CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

In phenomenology, the focus remains on gaining a thorough understanding of the meaning participants make from their lived experiences (Hays & Singh, 2012). The questions guiding this phenomenological research study include, (a) what are the lived experiences of undecided freshmen college students who go through the Career Construction Interview (CCI; Savickas 1998, 2002, 2009, 2011a) process, and (b) what aspects of the CCI prove to be most and least helpful to students within the context of the interview and interpretation process (Rehfuss, Cosio, et al., 2011). To gain a better understanding of the phenomenon and to answer these research questions, interviews with seven undecided, freshmen college students who engaged in the CCI process were conducted. This chapter details the researcher and participants, the analysis of the interviews including students’ perspectives of the CCI process, a discussion of the five main themes identified, and a synthesis of experiences.

**Researcher and Participants**

Prior to analyzing the data, it is essential to first consider the researcher’s biases since the researcher is the main instrument of a phenomenological study (Hays & Singh, 2012). It is also necessary to briefly reflect on the students who participated in this study.

**Researcher’s Bias**

To better understand my bias as a career counselor who works primarily with undecided, freshmen students at a large southeast university, it was necessary to bracket my biases and assumptions prior to engaging in participant interviews (Merriam, 2009). As detailed in the methodology section, my biases included: my personal perspective of having been an undecided college student, the fact that I acted as both the counselor guiding the participants through the
Career Construction Interview (CCI) as well as the follow-up interviewer, and my increasing understanding of how to administer the CCI in my current setting, which indicates my predisposed belief that the CCI process is a good and productive one. By acknowledging my biases, the participants’ perspectives remained the focus rather than my own meaning and assumptions becoming a distraction (Wolcott, 2001).

Participants

As explained in the methodology section, in order to identify participants for my study, I utilized criterion sampling, which is a purposeful sampling approach identifying specific individuals who meet a predetermined criterion (Hays & Singh, 2012). Based on the criteria selected, seven students volunteered to participate in my research study. All seven participants were undecided freshmen students who were currently in an Academic and Career Planning course at their university and had already completed two career assessments and interpretations in class including the TypeFocus (Wood, 1997) and the Strong Interest Inventory (SII, 2004). The participants included two male and five female students ranging in age from 18-19 years old. All interviews took place in my office in the Career Center at the students’ university and were audio recorded. The following includes descriptions of each of the seven participants, who are identified using their chosen pseudonyms.

Brianna. From the beginning, Brianna expressed that she was completely undecided about her major and was excited about going through the Career Construction Interview (CCI; Savickas 1998, 2002, 2009, 2011a) process, hoping that it would help her identify options to consider. Her TypeFocus (Wood, 1997) revealed that she had a personality type of ESFJ (Extroverted, Sensing, Feeling, Judging) and the Strong Interest Inventory (SII; 2004) indicated an interest type of ECA (Enterprising, Conventional, Artistic). When I asked her about majors of
interest, she mentioned advertising, marketing, and mass media arts but was still unsure which might be the best fit for her. After going through the CCI, she crafted her success formula as follows:

I will be most happy and successful when I am able to be strong, a good friend, outgoing, hardworking, passionate about what I’m doing, positive, smart, and brave. I like active environments with a lot of variety where I will not get bored and where I can solve problems and build relationships (co-workers and serving people). The best advice that I give myself is that everything happens for a reason. When something bad happens, I will remain optimistic and know that something better will come of this. In particular, I am interested in exploring majors and careers such as advertising, marketing, and mass media arts.

After completing the CCI, we went on to discuss how she could navigate these three majors of interest at her university in the coming weeks.

When Brianna returned for her follow-up interview, her comments revealed an overall positive impression of the CCI. While she had not yet chosen her major, she explained that the CCI had given her insight within her major exploration process as well as helped her grow in her self-awareness. She was able to give thorough answers to each of the interview questions, and her interview in total lasted 44 minutes.

Carly. Unlike Brianna who had been very excited and energetic about the process, Carly was more reserved and quiet, not talking unless being posed a question and sitting very still in her seat. Because her answers were short, it was necessary to probe with more questions to get a better sense of her past experiences and current interests. Carly’s TypeFocus (Wood, 1997) results were ISFJ (Introverted, Sensing, Feeling, Judging) and her Strong Interest Inventory (SII;
2004) results were SA (Social & Artistic). While undecided, her majors of interest were either interior design or “some” science that would prepare her for a pre-veterinarian track. Even with these two tracks, her Career Construction Interview (CCI; Savickas 1998, 2002, 2009, 2011a) revealed an overwhelming draw to the design field and not as much to the sciences. We discussed this and how she could gain some experience to help her make this decision in the coming months. Her success formula indicated the following:

I will be most happy and successful when I am able to be kind, caring, giving, encouraging, relaxed, and determined. I like environments that are design-oriented, where I am not bored but interested in what I’m doing, not overwhelmed, can build relationships with others that I work with, and work with others who inspire me. I like activities such as designing, solving problems, finding the right route to solutions, personally and helping others end up where they are supposed to be, and being kind and intelligent. The best advice that I give myself is that all our dreams can come true if we have the courage to pursue them. In particular, I am interested in exploring majors and careers such as pre-veterinarian, interior design, etc.

Carly seemed to enjoy the CCI even though she was not as vocal or expressive about her experiences. From all three of her assessments, she decided to do more processing as to which major would be the best fit her personality, interests, and life themes.

Carly returned for her interview, and she was once again reserved and quiet in her demeanor. Because she gave shorter answers to my questions, her interview was only 26 minutes long, even with me probing her with additional questions. Even though she seemed to like the CCI and what she had learned from her results, she struggled to vocalize many feelings
and reflections of her experience. While her interview was short, I felt like I did receive enough feedback from her to gain a sense of her true experience using this qualitative assessment.

**Charlotte.** Charlotte had a very energetic personality. She had an ESFP (Extroverted, Sensing, Feeling, Perceiving) type for the TypeFocus (Wood, 1997) and a SEC (Social, Enterprising, Conventional) type for her Strong Interest Inventory (SII; 2004). She wanted to go through the Career Construction Interview (CCI; Savickas 1998, 2002, 2009, 2011a) to help her decide between two majors: real estate or high school education. While the CCI did not give a clear indication of which direction was best, it allowed her to see how her major themes could complement both directions. Her success formula is as follows:

I will be most happy and successful when I am able to be happy, not dramatic, have faith, be outgoing, become confident in my abilities and not question myself, gain a clearer idea about direction, and build close relationships with individuals around me. I like environments such as high school settings and home buying settings where I can either help students deal with conflicts or help individuals buy a house together who are optimistic about their future. The best advice that I give myself is that “God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change; courage to change the things I can; and wisdom to know the difference” (Niebuhr, 1937). In particular, I am interested in exploring majors and careers such as Real Estate or High School Education.

Overall, she was the most excited about the results of the CCI and was encouraged to see the themes that surfaced throughout. Her excitement made me more excited as well about what I was doing with the CCI and how it has the potential to help undecided students to navigate who they are in relation to majors of interest.
When Charlotte returned for her interview, she was still very excited and pleased with her CCI results. From her results, she had been able to narrow down her interests to two majors in particular and was able to speak to how her themes in the CCI related to both directions, which provided her with flexibility in her decision making. While she, like Carly, gave me short answers to my interview questions, I used additional probing questions to get clearer responses when necessary. Even though her interview was short at 21 minutes, because she talked rather quickly, I found that her interview provided a good understanding of her experience using the CCI.

**Leah.** Leah was undecided but had some areas of interest including nursing, occupational therapy, and physical therapy as well as Spanish but was not quite sure which major would complement those interests. She told me that she was indecisive in nature, which had made her major decision challenging. Her TypeFocus (Wood, 1997) revealed that she was an ENFJ (Extroverted, Intuitive, Feeling, Judging) type, and her Strong Interest Inventory (SII; 2004) type was SI (Social & Investigative). Once her Career Construction Interview (CCI; Savickas 1998, 2002, 2009, 2011a) was complete, her success formula revealed the following:

I will be most happy and successful when I am able to be happy, supportive, imaginative, friendly, caring, adventurous, and calm. I like environments that are abnormal, adventurous, possibly life threatening, and mysterious, working around people who are leaders, teammates, and where I can sometimes work independently, solving problems and being adventurous. The best advice that I give myself is that for beautiful eyes look for the good in others, for beautiful lips speak only words of kindness, and for poise walk with the knowledge you are never alone. In particular, I am interested in exploring
majors and careers such as occupational therapy, physical therapy or other science/helping related field.

Leah was very positive and discussed what could have been negative situations in a very positive way. We discussed which majors could align with her career interests, especially as they related to human development versus solely focusing on the hard sciences.

Leah returned for her interview and was still not completely sure about her choice of major. She knew that she wanted to work within the medical field but was not sure of which major to choose. After having time to process her CCI results, she appreciated that the assessment had focused on her life story and lived experiences, which indicated certain themes. As I asked questions, she was expressive and thorough in her answers, which lengthened her interview to a little over one hour. Because of these details, I found that her responses provided an additional depth to the formation of my eventual themes.

**Lucy.** Lucy, prior to the Career Construction Interview (CCI; Savickas 1998, 2002, 2009, 2011a), told me that she was good at math and science but was not sure about which major to choose because she has so many interests. She said she really liked working with people and also wanted to make this decision by next semester, which was causing her some anxiety. While her TypeFocus (Wood, 1997) revealed that she had an ENTP (Extroverted, Intuitive, Thinking, Perceiving) personality, her scores on the Strong Interest Inventory (SII, 2004) were very low, not revealing a code. During the CCI, Lucy mentioned that she had a learning disability. Even though the specific type is unknown to me, this could have affected her low scoring of the SII in addition to her narrow list of current interests. While there was no official code, we were able to identify that her possible top three areas were ESA (Enterprising, Social, Artistic). She
appreciated going through the CCI because it gave her a voice, unlike the more objective results on the other two quantitative assessments. Her success formula included the following:

I will be most happy and successful when I am able to be a leader, authentic, athletic, free spirit, independent, and a pioneer. I like active, teamwork and independent environments where I can be around smart, instinctual people who can read others well. I like activities such as problem solving and activities that are action oriented. The best advice that I give myself is that you can’t disagree unless you understand. In particular, I am interested in exploring majors and careers such as graphic design, etc.…

The CCI went well with Lucy; however, I could tell that she was still learning to trust me during the assessment process. Because of her timeline for choosing a major, we discussed her returning to the Career Center to further explore majors and begin narrowing down her options.

When Lucy returned for her interview, she did not seem as concerned as before about her major search. She had still not decided on a major but was continuing to process the information she had gathered from her CCI results. While it took time for her to open up and trust me during the CCI process, she was more vocal during the interview, providing me with a detailed account of her experience using the assessment. Overall, her interview lasted 44 minutes, and was similar in thoroughness to Leah’s interview.

Luke. Throughout the entire Career Construction Interview (CCI; Savickas 1998, 2002, 2009, 2011a) process, Luke was very analytical about the assessment process as a whole. This analytical mindset complemented his Strong Interest Inventory (SII; 2004) type, which was IRA (Investigative, Realistic, Artistic) and his TypeFocus (Wood, 1997) type of ENTP (Extroverted, Intuitive, Thinking, Perceiving). Since Luke enjoyed analyzing his themes within the CCI, he
was able to discover areas of meaning but not able to pinpoint specific majors to explore. From his themes, he was able to create his success formula as follows:

I will be most happy and successful when I am able to be adventurous, active, have a leadership role, be passionate about what I’m doing, and see the potential in others. I like environments that are happy, possibly outdoors, working with others in a team-like atmosphere, with people who are happy and positive. I enjoy activities such as being adventurous, traveling, leading others, and helping others to be more effective in their personal development. The best advice that I give myself is that I do not need to give up, in every failure, there is success, and to express myself through music when there are no words for my emotions. In particular, I am interested in exploring majors and careers that are interdisciplinary and where I can get stronger in various skill sets.

He stated that he was more concerned about skill set development than choosing a specific major and wanted to study something very interdisciplinary. We discussed how he could do further research on majors that were broader and encompassed many areas of his interest. Overall, while he did not choose a major, he was appreciative of the opportunity to do the CCI because it really helped him identify themes that were meaningful to him and his career journey.

Luke continued his analytical thinking in the interview, as he had done throughout the CCI process. He was less stressed about his major selection once he had had time to consider his themes and the majors that might complement him. In between the CCI and his interview, he had also started a student organization on campus and was thinking about how that related to his leadership and entrepreneurial spirit, which surfaced throughout his CCI. His interview lasted 32 minutes, and because of his detailed responses, I felt as if that the timeframe was adequate.
Josh. From the beginning, I could tell that Josh was a creative individual and that having his parents approve of his choice of major was important to him. While he was undecided in his major, he was passionate about photography but also was considering marketing since he believed it would provide for a more secure profession. While this artistic interest was clear, his logical and future oriented mindset caused him some anxiety of whether to choose between something he loved versus something that seemed secure. His thoughts complemented both his TypeFocus (Wood, 1997) type of ENTJ (Extroverted, Intuitive, Thinking, and Judging) and his Strong Interest Inventory (SII; 2004) type of ECA (Enterprising, Conventional, Artistic). Through the Career Construction Interview (CCI; Savickas 1998, 2002, 2009, 2011a), the following success formula was developed:

I will be most happy and successful when I am able to be a hard worker, have stability, be family oriented, persistent, respected by others, smart, and funny. I like environments that are nature oriented, may include travel… where I can get to know my colleagues well, where I can be artistic, use my communication ability through sales, be around others, and use photography. I am concerned about being in a positive environment, learning how to grow when defeated by others who may be better at some things than me, working in a team, and being financially stable. The best advice I give myself when facing these concerns is “If you judge a fish by how he can climb a tree… people have different talents and abilities as far as how they learn.” In particular, I am interested in exploring majors and careers such as Marketing and Photography – something business and yet creative in nature.

Even though Josh enjoyed the CCI process, he wished that it had told him what to do next rather than just providing a list of themes through his success formula. He desired more tangible
results, similar to the SII and the TypeFocus, which gave immediate results linked to certain majors and careers. While this seemed the case, he expressed that he did learn more about himself through the CCI, which is always a positive thing.

When Josh returned for his interview, he was once again very straightforward in his responses about his experience using the CCI. Because he had not received immediate results during the CCI process, he had initially been dissatisfied, however, having had time to think about his results, he explained that he had benefitted from the process and was considering how to mix his interests either as a double major or a major/minor combination. His interview lasted 54 minutes, and I did not need to use as many probing questions with him since he gave detailed responses to each of my interview questions.

Table 4.1 Participant Information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Race</th>
<th>TypeFocus</th>
<th>Strong Interest Inventory</th>
<th>Majors &amp; Careers of Consideration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brianna</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>ESFJ</td>
<td>ECA</td>
<td>Advertising, Marketing, &amp; Mass Media Art</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carly</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>ISFJ</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>Pre-Vet &amp; Interior Design</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charlotte</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>ESFP</td>
<td>SEC</td>
<td>Real Estate &amp; High School Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leah</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>ENFJ</td>
<td>SI</td>
<td>Nursing, Occupational Therapy &amp; Physical Therapy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lucy</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>ENTP</td>
<td>ESA (low code)</td>
<td>Graphic Design</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luke</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>ENTP</td>
<td>IRA</td>
<td>Interdisciplinary Major</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Josh</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>ENTJ</td>
<td>ECA</td>
<td>Marketing &amp; Photography</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Analysis of Interviews

Once all seven participant interviews were completed, I began the analysis of the interview data by listening and conducting my own transcription of the interviews. When the transcriptions were completed, I reread through the transcripts multiple times and began implementing Creswell’s (2007) six-step structure for analyzing the data. Stemming from this analysis process, five main themes emerged in regards to the meaning undecided, freshmen students made from their lived experiences of the Career Construction Interview (CCI; Savickas 1998, 2002, 2009, 2011a) process.

Synthesis of Data, Horizontalization, & Clustered Themes

While reading and re-reading the seven transcripts, I took notes in the margins of each transcript noting participants’ specific observations of the phenomenon. My research team also followed this same note-taking format as they read through their transcripts. From these observations, I made a codebook with possible themes that had emerged from participant quotes. I then included the process of horizontalization to help identify nonrepetitive and nonoverlapping statements in the participants’ transcripts (Hays & Singh, 2012). Once the process of horizontalization was completed, I clustered the most significant themes containing both textural (i.e., understanding of the meaning and depth of the experience) and structural (i.e., identifying multiple meanings) descriptions of participants’ lived experiences of the phenomenon (Hays & Singh, 2012). Initially, I had 15 potential themes which included the following: (1) relationship between expectation and satisfaction, (2) personalization, (3) self-awareness, (4) connecting to the past, (5) authenticity and depth, (6) verbalizing and interpersonal connection to the counselor, (7) responses process, (8) right answer, (9) consistent themes, (10) students’ perspectives of counselor, (11) counselor’s perspective of students’ CCIs, (12) most enjoyable question, (13)
most difficult question, (14) qualitative versus qualitative assessments, and (15) time. After consulting with my dissertation chair and my research team, we were able to use horizontalization and theme clustering to narrow down my initial list of potential themes to five main themes that surfaced from students’ lived experiences as well as participant observations of the Career Construction Interview (CCI; Savickas 1998, 2002, 2009, 2011a), and we decided that the other areas should be presented under considerations of the CCI process.

**Discussion of Themes**

While I had initially considered 15 areas in terms of whether they could be seen as themes or if they fell more into the students’ observations category about the overall Career Construction Interview (CCI; Savickas 1998, 2002, 2009, 2011a) process, with the help of my dissertation chair and research team, we were able to reduce this to five main themes. Because it is essential to establish trustworthiness in phenomenology, it was important that both my research team and dissertation chair play a significant part in identifying and co-constructing these themes. We agreed that the five following themes were significant: (1) relationship between expectation and satisfaction, (2) personalization, (3) self-awareness, (4) connection to the past, and (5) authenticity and depth. The following illustrates these themes through thick, rich statements students made during the seven interviews.

**Relationship Between Expectation & Satisfaction**

When considering the expectations that students brought into the Career Construction Interview (CCI; Savickas 1998, 2002, 2009, 2011a), it was evident that like the other two standardized assessments, which they had previously taken in class, they desired the CCI to “tell them what they should do.” Both the TypeFocus (Wood, 1997) and the Strong Interest Inventory (SII, 2004) provide a connection between someone’s personality or interest type and a variety of
majors and careers that align with that type. Being that the CCI did not provide them with a specific list of majors and careers to consider, students were initially disappointed by this, even though they mentioned that the CCI had instead helped them narrow down their options once they established their themes. While the CCI did not live up to the students’ initial expectations, all seven said that it was a beneficial experience for them and many mentioned that they wished other undecided, freshmen students could go through the process as well, to help them narrow their major and career options early in their collegiate experience. When asked about his expectation and satisfaction of going through the CCI process, Josh described his experience and desire to take career assessments in hopes of making a decision.

I’ve been trying to take as many tests and going through as many things to figure out what I want to do. Um, so, hopefully one of them (career assessments) works. I think people that, like me, in that, don’t know still what they’re going to do, I mean like I said, I’ve been trying to like do everything, every kind of assessment and whatever to figure out (my major)… if they’re (students) not getting results (from quantitative assessments) or if they want a different look on it, I would recommend it (the CCI).

Lucy reflected on her undecided, freshmen student status and how she found the CCI to help her narrow down her options.

Well I still, like, I’m not really knowing what I want to do. Um, I think that every time I do one of these tests, they kind of get presented with an idea that may be possible, may be I want to do or even like just things that are too, that contrast way too much, and it would not be really, realistic. So I think it’s helped me narrow down a little bit more but not, I mean I still don’t know what I want to do. Well especially people in my situation (undecided, freshmen students) and also the fact, I think people, a lot of freshmen are
like, ‘Oh I know my major...’ but they actually don’t know what they want to do. I think that everyone could benefit first of all from kind of getting a review of what you are like. I think that everyone should have had to do this (the CCI).

Likewise, Brianna discussed her expectations and satisfaction with the CCI process.

It (the CCI) helped me a lot, more than I thought that it could. Like really, like I’ve like went back and actually like really thought about it, as I was like, wow, this is actually like helped me narrow things down a lot. So, I think that it helped a lot. Now I’m kind of like, I gotta know like specific directions I’m wanting to go towards, and it’s helping a lot to like, to even like narrow it down more and to look at like, like OK, ‘How can I actually do this. How can I actually like get into this college and not just, oh, may be this, may be that.’ And it’s like not as scary to like, actually consider things. This (the CCI) kind of like helps me narrow it down to what I would be good at... it’s really helpful actually.

So, I don’t really think I would change anything. I can’t think of anything I would add.

Charlotte reflected on her expectations and satisfaction of the CCI process and how it had helped her consider the pros and cons of various majors.

I didn’t expect it to like for sure tell me to go Education or for sure go to like realistic, so, I think in general, it cleared up a lot of doubts and that’s all I was really hoping for. Now I’m just kind of like stuck in the middle of which way to go. I think I’m still going back and forth, um, it’s just there are so many like pros and cons of each one (majors) and it’s hard to decide.

Finally, Carly had similar thoughts about her experience as well as her major selection process.

I feel like they (career assessments) can really help me explore majors and find the best one for me and also find, eliminate ones that I don’t want to do. And just overall help me
come to a decision faster rather than going through majors that I’m not suited for. I’m still exploring but I’m... more informed on myself, so that I can make a decision better and faster. I think that it went pretty well... I’m glad I did it. It was helpful. I’ll plan to use it ... just because it narrows stuff down about me.

Students’ reflections revealed that while they desired an assessment like the CCI to give them specific examples of careers and majors to explore, similar to the TypeFocus (Wood, 1997) and Strong Interest Inventory (SII; 2004), they were not disappointed that this expectation did not occur but rather were pleased that their choices were narrowed down after going through this process.

**Personalization**

When reflecting on their experiences using the Career Construction Interview (CCI; Savickas 1998, 2002, 2009, 2011a), another commonality was the personalization that students felt this qualitative assessment gave them. They discussed that unlike the other quantitative assessments, which gave them generalizable results, the CCI provided them with personal and unique results that related specifically to them and their lived experiences. Many commented that this assessment provided an individualized perspective of their interests and personality traits, which they really appreciated, since it painted a bigger life picture rather than focusing solely on a career. They were able to take this holistic picture of themselves and begin exploring how that related to both majors and career paths.

Specifically, when considering the different type of personalization between the quantitative assessments and the qualitative CCI, Lucy made the following observation:

The career assessments (quantitative assessments) we took were, like they didn’t really give you results. Like they gave me results, but not exactly the ones that I was looking
for specifically. And I think that they, rather than um, they give you like, when they give you back your results, the fitting the results to like everyone can get like as another person getting the same results as you. I mean like, one in a million, but like, still you can still like similar results as other people, where in this (the CCI), it’s going to… I mean, you can’t, at all, so it’s kind of um, I think it will be more thorough in general… forming the results around you rather than you forming around the results. I think this (the CCI) will also help me not only in like school but also with like jobs and personal life too.

Josh reflected similarly on the personalization the CCI provided compared to the other quantitative assessments.

I think that… it (the CCI) was more like personalized. So, um, rather than just putting in a bunch of answers on a test and spitting out (answers on quantitative assessments), it’s more I guess thought out. I thought it was a lot better than the other tests (quantitative assessments) that I took because it analyzed like… ‘me’ instead of just my interests.

Carly also explained, “It was more specific to me… like how the magazines and TV shows related to the designs aspects that I’m interested in and how there was a lot of design aspects in all the questions.” When thinking about the overarching themes within his CCI results and how they related to him personally, Luke made the observation, “It’s just like good to know and see that, that’s what I am and who I am.” Leah continued by examining how some of the questions brought out her interests and personality, which reflected on all of her life holistically and how she could see how themes connected to a possible major.

Definitely looking at all aspects of my life because I didn’t really think, “Oh, I wonder why I like this TV show?” It’s more like now I’m thinking about like, well may be there
is an aspect of like my personality that would suit... I used to look at, like, “Oh, here are all the school subjects... here are all the majors. So let’s like look at it this way.” But now, it’s like looking at kind of like my personality traits and all aspects of my life.

Especially when I was little until now and how that like influences my, I guess major.

While interview questions did not focus on having students compare and contrast the CCI with the other quantitative assessments they took in class, many of them discussed how they enjoyed and benefitted more from the CCI since it was more personalized to them. They also began to see their lives more holistically, when examining the unique and overlapping themes in their CCIs, and were able to begin exploring how majors and careers could best complement those themes.

**Self-Awareness**

Many students decide to take career assessments to gain a stronger self-awareness, which enable them to make better decisions regarding a college major or career path (Armstrong & Rounds, 2010). While quantitative assessments can certainly support students in their self-awareness, qualitative assessments also help students explore their identity by personally considering how their past has influenced their present mindset towards future career planning (Gysbers, 2005; Schultheiss, 2005). Using the Career Construction Interview (CCI; Savickas 1998, 2002, 2009, 2011a), students became more self-aware after realizing things about themselves they had not considered before and looking at the link between past events and their interests compared to future possibilities. Many said they were able to see how their personal qualities could readily fit into a major or career, and having this knowledge reduced their immediate fear and anxiety when looking at their unknown future. Instead of the CCI highlighting a single major or career that would match their personal qualities, students left with
a narrowed down list of majors and career paths to consider. For instance, Charlotte made many observations about how this helped her better know herself and also narrow down her major and career options.

I really wanted to figure out more about myself. I would have never thought about my past experiences and how they would help my future career. I think just reflecting on all of my experiences and what I like to do, um, I’ve kind of realized, actually, I’m wanting an environment that’s not dramatic and that’s not, um, very like individualized. I think I’ve definitely like ruled things out for sure. Um, like physical therapy, I like the idea of it but I kind of realize that I’m not like that person who could get through a chemistry class and like be investigative in my approach, um, and I like thinking about all of the things that I’ve said. I’m, like the things that I’m interested in would actually be more appropriate for my career like, housing, I like that, and um, making um like a difference in people’s lives. I would like to do that.

Charlotte went on to discuss her emotion after narrowing down her search and realizing what areas might be the better fit for her, based on her CCI results.

I just think that it was helpful overall, like when I left the meeting, my, the first meeting that I was almost like teary eyed thinking, you know, I’ve kind of figured out where I am and like what I should do, and um, I’ve never like said these things out loud. And um, so like I would not have had the experience, and um I’m like really appreciative for it.

Carly also discussed the relevance of the CCI in helping her consider who she is and who she is becoming and how those qualities relate to certain majors and career paths.

I mean, it just made me realize the qualities more. I never thought about that specifically before. I think the people that I admire (was the most beneficial) because it showed what
qualities I have or want in the future and to like why I admire them… some of the characteristics, well some of mine are different than theirs. The like encouraging, um, I feel like I need to build that up for the future. They represent who I want to become… as a person… and even though it didn’t make me decide on a major, it helped me, like know the pros and cons of each one and like how they fit with me.

Leah appreciated that she got to view herself through her interests and how those interests could relate to a major and career. She stated, “Just looking at myself through what I like, cause if I like something, that means I’m probably going to want to be like it. So, yea, just looking at the things around me that I want to be like and then looking at how that relates to my major and career.” Brianna made the comment that when going through the CCI process, “It was kind of like discovering a few new things” about herself that she had not realized before. Finally, Luke discussed how after looking at the themes that presented themselves throughout his CCI, he was surprised how different questions could bring up relatable answers, which could inform him more about himself and the possible directions he could take professionally.

I thought it was very interesting the way that the questions related, like how just asking who do you like, who do you look up to, gives insight onto the person you are and want to be. Um… I mean, the way that things, you know, you don’t think they relate, like what TV show you watch, that shouldn’t relate but it does, you know.

Students in general found it interesting how the CCI could illuminate so many aspects of themselves through the use of questions, especially those that related to their interests and the role models they resembled.
Connecting to the Past

In reflecting upon the questions on the Career Construction Interview (CCI; Savickas 1998, 2002, 2009, 2011a), which students struggled with the most, many found it challenging to remember past events of importance and specific individuals who had played a significant role in their lives. Since career planning occurs mostly in the present and future tense, going back to their past caught many students off guard. When asked about their past, many students made the assumption that they had to come up with memories of events or role models that had some significance aligning with a specific majors or careers, even though this was not part of the question. Additionally, they found it challenging to link the themes uncovered in past memories with current major and career aspirations. For instance, Josh reflected on his experience trying to remember events and individuals from his early childhood and the challenge he found in this process.

It (the CCI) made me think a lot about um, a lot of the things I’ve done in my past and like all the memories, because um, I don’t really think about them much, and like I said, I don’t really have like great of a memory of my childhood, not that it was bad but…. I don’t remember it that well. I think just the biggest problem, and it wasn’t with the interview, but it was just more of my ability to remember like the, the things (memory questions). I just thought that my biggest problem was just the remembering things. Um… so it might have just been just a little hiccup cause I can’t really remember the past.

Similarly, Brianna pointed out that it was difficult for her to remember things from her past by saying, “Yea like just to think about things like from when you were young, like, what are some things from a really young age? Which that could just be me too, cause I’m not really like an on
the spot type of person.” Leah made the observation that when she was considering going through the CCI process, she was not expecting to have to answer questions about past events but rather focus more on future aspirations.

I didn’t really expect like the questions about my childhood as much. I thought it was going to be like, “Where do you see yourself?” Because talking about the future a lot of times, especially for undecided students is stressful, because it’s like, “I don’t know!” Lucy made similar observations and was able to see the importance of thinking about her past and how that could impact her present and future career development.

I think it’s interesting that you ask about your first years because it makes total sense because, I wouldn’t be the person I am if I didn’t have, I don’t know, that, everyone starts at a point, and I think the first couple of years are what distinguishes who you are from other people. Some themes will change a little bit, but um, I don’t know, that’s, so I got, that was beneficial… it’s a different perspective… everyone has sort of who they want to be like when they’re little, they’re like, describe who they want to be… it’s just, I didn’t really pay attention to that as much.

While many of the students struggled to initially come up with memories and specific individuals who had influenced them in the past, once they were able to see the significance in these past memories, they were amazed at the personal themes that surfaced and how they could potentially relate to both major and career exploration.

**Authenticity & Depth**

Aligning with the concept of qualitative assessments, which intentionally focus on the meaning and depth of individuals’ lived experiences, students made comments about how the Career Construction Interview (CCI; Savickas 1998, 2002, 2009, 2011a) facilitated a depth and
authenticity that other assessments had not be able to achieve. While the students felt like their “types” on both the TypeFocus (Wood, 1997) and Strong Interest Inventory (SII; 2004) were somewhat authentic, these assessments did not provide as much depth to them individually compared with the CCI. For example, when asking about which assessment they preferred, Leah commented, “Probably this one (the CCI) just because I feel like this is more in depth. I don’t think you can fake it as much.” Lucy also made the observation saying, “I think just drawing out the certain characteristics that I bring, on all different levels… once you go deep enough and into a person, you will eventually hit something.” Luke personally was amazed that from five questions, he was able to discover many answers that relayed to his main themes throughout his CCI.

You know when you say five questions, that’s pretty impressive but considering the questions, how they all really do directly attack your core… seems about right. I mean five, that’s crazy, but… I don’t know. It was five questions but it wasn’t five answers.

When considering the CCI versus conversations with her parents about major and career, Charlotte explained, “I’ve always, even like with my parents, have not like gone so in depth with um my past and how that could help my future.” As students identified, the CCI provided them with a structure to go in depth with who they are as individuals and promoted authenticity in their responses unlike the quantitative assessments, which they said were not as deep and could be “faked.”

Finally, students explained their enjoyment of the Career Construction Interview (CCI; Savickas 1998, 2002, 2009, 2011a) since it had provided more authentic and deep results versus the other two quantitative career assessments they had completed earlier in the semester. For
instance, Charlotte explained, “I think this type (the CCI) helped me a lot more than my first type of tests (quantitative assessments). Um, the first type… it ranged in a whole different types of careers that I probably wouldn’t ever be interested in. And I know that it’s like, it said ‘bus driver,’ and I know the concept of being social and moving around, but you’re so focused on… with this interview, I’m more like actually thinking about careers that I would like and not just potential like ‘bus driver, florist…’ that would fit that 4-letter equation.” While all seven students said that they found some meaning from the TypeFocus (Wood, 1997) and the Strong Interest Inventory (SII; 2004), it was unanimous that they preferred the CCI over these other two quantitative assessments because of the way it was tailored specifically to them, allowing them to reach a depth unmet by the other assessments.

**Participant Observations of the Career Construction Interview Process**

In addition to the five main themes, there were many observations made by the participants in regards to the Career Construction Interview (CCI; Savickas 1998, 2002, 2009, 2011a) process itself. While these areas did not reach saturation to become a theme, they were consistent enough throughout the seven transcripts to be considered. These areas for consideration included: (1) verbalization and interpersonal connection to the counselor, (2) participants’ response process, (3) providing a right answer, (4) seeing consistent themes, (5) participants’ perspective of the counselor, (6) counselor’s perspective of the participants’ CCI’s, (7) the most enjoyable and the most difficult questions on the CCI, and (8) time. While these nine areas are in addition to the five main themes, they do provide a better understanding of the students’ perspective on the CCI process as a whole.

One of the main observations made by participants was that it was beneficial for them to both verbalize their thoughts, rather than processing them internally, as well interact with the
counselor in person instead of relying on a computerized assessment. As Charlotte observed, “I really wanted to talk to someone one-on-one… saying it out loud really like cleared up things in my mind about what I was going to do.” Carly also explained, “I like giving examples… just explaining how they linked to me rather than just like, multiple choice answers on those other tests that we took in class.” Many students made the observation that it was nice to talk about their interests out loud, which allowed them to feel heard by the counselor and helped them grasp interests, which may not have surfaced outside this type of qualitative interview discussion.

Another major observation made by many of the participants was that it was difficult to quickly think of responses to the Career Construction Interview (CCI; Savickas 1998, 2002, 2009, 2011a) questions in the midst of the interview. As Carly pointed out, “It was hard to think on the spot… maybe get the questions earlier… just thinking about them.” While receiving the questions prior to the interview was a common theme among many participants, Josh made a comment that this might hinder the overall authenticity of the CCI results. As he stated, “I don’t know about giving the questions cause I don’t know if that would give you a different type of answer, cause that might give people… like they can create like what their answers are going to be, and they might, or be… cause that could go towards like what they want to be instead of just thinking in the moment.” While many of the students said that receiving the questions prior to the CCI would be helpful, some also acknowledged that their answers would not be as “spontaneous” and would thus possibly hinder the authenticity of the themes that would surface from more “rehearsed” answers.

In addition to wanting the questions prior to going through the Career Construction Interview (CCI; Savickas 1998, 2002, 2009, 2011a), in order to prepare their responses for the interview, some students were cautious in their answers, thinking that they needed to provide the
“right answer” to the question rather than what they initially said during the interview. For instance, Carly explained that, “Some of the questions like, I could have given better answers to….” While the CCI does not ask for a “right” answer to any of the questions, many students assumed that there was one and struggled with choosing the “best” answer for each of their responses.

Another aspect of students’ observations is that throughout the Career Construction Interview (CCI; Savickas 1998, 2002, 2009, 2011a) process, they were able to see consistent themes in their responses, which allowed them to make meaning from them. Luke commented that, “The different connections and the meaning in them (the questions), and common themes… that was interesting. It was… like 25 answers that all had the same thing going through them….” Also, Lucy mentioned that it was helpful to see the consistent themes and then connect them in her final script at the end, which was a good indication when determining her next step towards choosing a major and career path.

Bringing in the same assumption that stems from quantitative career assessments where it is mainly the counselor who is the expert and is able to interpret assessment results (Hirschi & Lage, 2008), the students assumed that I as the career counselor would also be the expert, using the Career Construction Interview (CCI; Savickas 1998, 2002, 2009, 2011a) and telling them what they should do next. For example, once we had completed the CCI process, Luke desired direct feedback on his “results” by saying, “You asking about some area of my life or experience and me telling you what it is and then from that, you saying, ‘Oh, well this is what it means,’ you know ‘this is what we can draw from it….’ You can, put it together… it’s nice hearing what you’ve put together… I want to hear more from you on the things that you have um synthesized.” While some students desired that the counselor be the expert, the CCI clearly is an
assessment aimed at empowering students to be their own expert, constructing their own reality (Busacca, 2007; Grier-Reed & Skaar, 2010; Obi, 2015)

In addition to the students’ perspectives of the counselor’s role in the Career Construction Interview (CCI; Savickas 1998, 2002, 2009, 2011a) process, they also made the observation that counselors need to be careful not to judge what students are saying or reveal the “secret” meaning of the CCI too early in the process. For example, Josh commented, “It could be good and bad in both ways that the interviewer can put judgment on them (the student) by like what they talked about and how much interest…” they may show in something particular. Leah observed, “I guess kind of making it more secretive with what you’re doing (what the counselor is doing)… Because after the first question… I was really careful… but I was like whatever I say, she is like really listening to the key words… like I’d better choose wisely! You know? So like making it more secretive I guess.” These comments certainly draw attention to the fact that counselors who use the CCI need to be aware of their own biases and how they could come across when discussing the themes found within someone’s CCI results. Also, counselors need to not be forthcoming with the meaning behind each question on the CCI too early, which might hinder the authenticity of what the individual says versus what they think they need to say based on the questions.

In terms of the most enjoyable and the most difficult questions on the Career Construction Interview (CCI; Savickas 1998, 2002, 2009, 2011a), there was no one specific question that was definitively the most enjoyable or the most difficult. Based on the interests and past experiences of the students, each student, for the most part, found a question enjoyable or difficult for various reasons. While answers were varied, the majority of the students did struggle with questions that dealt with thinking about past role models (i.e., question #1 on the
CCI) and past experiences (i.e., question #5 on the CCI). For example, Carly discussed, “The memories (question #5 – earliest recollections)... it was kind of hard to think of some of the most important ones (memories) from my whole life. Like, narrow them down but also choose the best ones that fit with that (major or career). And then... like explaining why I, why they are meaningful.” From these observations as well as others, one of the five themes that was discussed was the students’ ability to connect with the past, since many of them struggled to respond to these questions on the CCI.

Finally, qualitative career assessments, such as the Career Construction Interview (CCI; Savickas 1998, 2002, 2009, 2011a) can be more time consuming compared to other quantitative career assessments, which can be taken online and results given immediately after completion. While time could be an issue for students and counselors, students who participated in this study recognized that while the CCI took about one-hour, they benefitted from the time spent going through it and appreciated the meaning uncovered in their results. For example, Leah mentioned that, “It is very time consuming, but, it is what it is... definitely worth it.” Lucy also observed that, “If you’re going go through with it...” you “might as well go all the way... the more you put in, the more you’ll get out.” Even though students did recognize that the CCI was a little bit longer than the other two quantitative assessments, which they had taken in their Academic and Career Planning course, they found that the time was not a hindrance for them overall.

**Synthesis of Experiences**

Aligning with the tradition of phenomenology, this qualitative research study focused on the following research questions: (a) what are the lived experiences of undecided freshmen college students who go through the Career Construction Interview (CCI; Savickas 1998, 2002, 2009, 2011a) and (b) what aspects of the CCI prove to be most and least helpful to students
within the context of the interview and interpretation process (Rehfuss, Cosio, et al., 2011).

Seven undecided freshmen college students found meaning in the CCI process by considering the relationship between their expectation and satisfaction, the personalization of the CCI, the growth in their self-awareness, their ability to connect to the past, and the authenticity and depth that the CCI provided for them. Additionally, students benefitted from the integration of their TypeFocus (Wood, 1997) and Strong Interest Inventory (SII; 2004) along with their themes, which emerged from the CCI. By observing all three of these assessments simultaneously, students were able to grasp the interwoven connection in themes that were presented in both the quantitative and qualitative results (Brott, 2004). While the integration of quantitative assessments with the CCI was favorable, overall, these undecided freshmen students found the CCI to be more beneficial in helping them narrow their major and career focus versus the TypeFocus and the SII. Based on the findings of students’ experiences, the next chapter will focus on an overall discussion as well as recommendations for career counselors who may want to incorporate this assessment tool into their settings when working with undecided freshmen college students.
CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

In this final chapter, I summarize each of the previous chapters as well as the findings of this study regarding undecided freshmen college students’ experience participating in the Career Construction Interview (CCI; Savickas 1998, 2002, 2009, 2011a) process. Following the chapter summarizations, I provide a discussion and recommendations of the five themes that surfaced from the students’ lived experience of the CCI process, as well as recommendations for working with undecided college students, implementing both qualitative and quantitative career assessments, and using the CCI in counseling settings. Finally, limitations will be addressed as well as implications for future research.

Summary of the Study

Beginning in chapter 1, I discussed the challenges that many millennial undecided freshmen college students are facing today as they enter college unable to make an immediate decision about their major. As shown, millennial college students desire purpose and meaning in their work, high salary and benefits, as well as the opportunity to make a contribution to society through their talents and abilities (De Hauw & De Vos, 2010; Howe & Strauss, 2007; Ng & Gossett, 2013; Ng, et al., 2010; Twenge, 2010; Twenge, 2013; Twenge & Campbell, 2008). When they first arrive on their college campus, many millennial students face the challenge of choosing a major that will align with these career aspirations (Bullock-Yowell et al., 2014; Carduner et al., 2011; Chickering, 2011; Hayrapetyan & Kuruvilla, 2012; Porter & Umbach, 2006). Additionally, many students feel pressure from their parents to pursue particular majors that align with careers, which seem more stable and may yield a high income (Bullock-Yowell et al., 2014). Universities also place an emphasis on choosing a major as early as possible, which
causes some anxiety in freshmen students who in turn may make a premature decision in their major selection rather than exploring all of their options (Cuseo, 2005). Considering the rising cost of tuition, many college freshmen are concerned that if they do not choose a major quickly, this may impact their overall costs of their college education (Galotti, et al., 2006; Cuseo, 2005; Ronan, 2005; Stater, 2011). With these growing concerns, it is essential that university personnel support students in the midst of their major selection process and provide environments, which can empower students who lack confidence in making this decision alone (Garis, 2014; Parks, 2011; Tampke & Durodoye, 2013).

Specifically, career counselors on college campuses can be a support to these students as they explore majors that would be a good fit for them through individual career counseling, workshops, and networking opportunities with a variety of employers (Schaub, 2012). In addition, career counselors use career assessments to help students navigate their interests and personality types, which align with certain major and career fields (Armstrong & Rounds, 2010). While quantitative assessments have been primarily used over the past decades (Taber et al., 2011), qualitative approaches are becoming an additional resource that career counselors can use with students to help them navigate their major and career selection (Busacca, 2007). In this study, the Career Construction Interview (CCI; Savickas 1998, 2002, 2009, 2011a), which is one type of qualitative assessment, was considered from the perspective of undecided freshmen college students who were in the process of choosing their major. While some research has been done regarding how this assessment benefits certain populations (Barclay & Wolff, 2012; Di Fabio, 2012; Rehfuss, Del Corso, et al., 2011), there is a lack of research considering the experiences of individuals who engage in the CCI process (Rehfuss, Del Corso, et al., 2011). In light of the challenges many undecided freshmen college students are facing today, this study
considered the students’ lived experiences of the CCI process and which aspects of the CCI proved to be most and least meaningful to them (Rehfuss, Del Corso, et al., 2011).

Chapter 2 focused on a literature review of topics including the challenges millennial undecided freshmen college students face today, types of quantitative career assessments used to support students’ career development, and a type of qualitative assessment known as the Career Construction Interview (CCI; Savickas 1998, 2002, 2009, 2011a). Through an analysis of these topics, literature indicated a lack of research on the undecided college student population (Bullock-Yowell, 2014) and the utilization of qualitative career assessment approaches such as the CCI, in students’ major and career exploration (Maree, 2013; McMahon et al., 2003). In order to better understand the impact of a qualitative assessment such as the CCI in the major and career exploration process, undecided freshmen students’ perspectives were considered by posing two research questions: (a) what are the lived experiences of undecided freshmen college students who go through the CCI process and (b) what aspects of the CCI prove to be most and least helpful to students within the context of the interview and interpretation process (Rehfuss, Del Corso, et al., 2011). By considering these students’ perspectives, this research study aimed to increase counselors’ awareness of how the CCI could be used to aid in students’ major and career selection process on college campuses.

In chapter 3, phenomenology, which is a qualitative research tradition, as well as constructivism were discussed. Phenomenology allowed me to consider the lived experiences of the undecided freshmen students who participated in the Career Construction Interview (CCI; Savickas 1998, 2002, 2009, 2011a) process, and through the framework of constructivism, I was able to observe how they constructed their own knowledge from their lived experiences (Hays & Singh, 2012). Using the phenomenological process, I collected data by interviewing seven
participants who shared the same pre-determined criteria, analyzed participants’ transcripts in search for meaning, and identified direct quotes from participants’ lived experiences of the CCI process, which revealed common themes (Creswell, 2007). Also, within this chapter, I discussed the sampling method used, the data collection process, ethical considerations, the development of interview questions, the interview procedure, the data management and analysis process, trustworthiness, and my role as the researcher. Since I was the primary career counselor who both conducted the CCI with participants as well as their follow up interview about their experience using the CCI, I knew that it was essential to also discuss my biases and assumptions.

Chapter 4 revealed the major themes that emerged once the data analysis of the seven participants’ interviews were completed. Through the use of horizontalization and clustering of themes, five main themes were identified: (1) relationship between expectation and satisfaction, (2) personalization, (3) self-awareness, (4) connection to the past, and (5) authenticity and depth. As in phenomenology, rich, thick description was used by providing examples of participants’ direct quotes from their lived experience of the Career Construction Interview (CCI; Savickas 1998, 2002, 2009, 2011a). In addition to the five main themes, participant observations were discussed to further highlight their experiences of the CCI process overall. In addition to the CCI, participants also benefited from the inclusion of their TypeFocus (Wood, 1997) and their Strong Interest Inventory (SII; 2004) results, which provided a holistic perspective of their major and career exploration. Ultimately, while the students appreciated the incorporation of the quantitative assessments along with the qualitative one, they most enjoyed the CCI process, which enabled them to better narrow their major and career focus.
Discussion of Themes and Recommendations

This qualitative research study revealed five important themes to consider when providing the Career Construction Interview (CCI; Savickas 1998, 2002, 2009, 2011a) to undecided freshmen college students who are exploring majors on their university campuses. The first theme that was consistent among participants was the relationship between their initial expectation of this assessment and their overall satisfaction once the assessment had been completed. For example, it was apparent that students wanted a “list” of careers or majors once the CCI had been completed, similar to the TypeFocus (Wood, 1997) and Strong Interest Inventory (SII; 2004), which provide sets of lists based on a students’ “types.” Before going through the CCI process with students, it is essential that counselors explain to students that there will not be a list of careers or majors that emerge from the assessment itself, but rather, themes that may point to particular majors and career paths. Once students know that they will be answering questions, rather than taking a computerized assessment that produces majors and careers at the end, students will come into the CCI assessment process knowing that themes and the life script are the goals of taking this assessment.

Secondly, students found that they enjoyed this assessment over the Typefocus (Wood, 1997) and the Strong Interest Inventory (SII; 2004) due to its personalization. Since millennial students tend to appreciate individual attention (Twenge & Campbell, 2008), knowing that they also value this personalization within an assessment is not surprising. This will be a selling point for counselors aiming to increase the number of Career Construction Interviews (CCI; Savickas 1998, 2002, 2009, 2011a) conducted each academic year, whether in one-on-one or group settings. When students understand that this assessment is personal to them as individuals as well as their major and career exploration, rather than it being more generalizable as the other
quantitative assessments tend to be, they will be able to understand themselves more thoroughly prior to navigating the list of major and career options. Helping students see the value in the personalization of the CCI will be key when trying to market this tool to students on university campuses who may not be familiar with this type of assessment.

The third theme that surfaced was how the Career Construction Interview (CCI; Savickas 1998, 2002, 2009, 2011a) aided students’ personal growth in their self-awareness of potential majors and career paths. Since many college students struggle to understand their career identity and potential career path, helping them explore meaning within their lived experiences will promote their self-awareness of majors and careers that might be a good fit for them (Fouad, Guillen, Harris-Hodge, Novakovic, Terry, & Kantamneni, 2006; Thompson & Feldman, 2010). By implementing assessments like the CCI with students early in their college experience, this will facilitate their personal self-awareness, hopefully aiding them in their choice of an academic track in their freshmen or sophomore year as well as graduating in a timely manner.

Another common theme among participants in this study was the challenge to remember past events. Within quantitative assessments, the focus is usually on current and future career planning; however, in the Career Construction Interview (CCI; Savickas 1998, 2002, 2009, 2011a), the focus is also on students’ past experiences, which may be confusing to students when they initially are asked the first question about their past role models. Again, it will be essential to explain to students, prior to going through the CCI that questions may involve past or present events so that they feel more prepared to answer each question that is posed to them. It is also important to let them know that the memories they first think of, when asked a question, should be used in the CCI rather than them trying too hard to identify events they think have influenced their current situations. This will indicate to students that there are no “right” or “wrong”
answers on the CCI, but more accurately, the memories that arise at a particular point in time did so for a reason.

Finally, millennial college students strive for deeper meaning and a more thorough understanding of who they are as individuals (Twenge, 2013), which led to the final theme of authenticity and depth that students found through the Career Construction Interview (CCI; Savickas 1998, 2002, 2009, 2011a). The main question many students have is “What am I going to do with my life?” (Thompson & Feldman, 2010). Knowing that the CCI fosters an authenticity and depth in response to the five questions, students appreciated this type of assessment more than the quantitative assessments since many of them claimed they could have “faked” their responses. They appreciated that when asked questions on the CCI, there was no reason not to respond authentically, which produced a deeper set of understanding how their past experiences influenced who they are as individuals. While quantitative assessments like the TypeFocus (Wood, 1997) and the Strong Interest Inventory (SII; 2004) have the potential to indicate majors and careers that may be a good fit for students, these assessments did not provide the authenticity and depth that students appreciated in the themes found in their CCI. Ultimately, counselors need to be familiar with each type of assessment approach so that they will know when it is most appropriate to provide a specific resource to students, based on the students’ immediate needs.

**Recommendations for Working with Undecided College Students**

As previously seen, students enter college and rarely know immediately what to choose as a major (Starling & Miller, 2011). Even with the great numbers of undecided students entering universities each year, very little research has focused on this population and so it needs to remain a topic of discussion in the years ahead (Bullock-Yowell, 2014; Lepre, 2007; Porter &
Umbach, 2006). In order to support students in their major selection, university staff and faculty need to explore structured ways to reach these students whether through career development courses or one-on-one career counseling so that students can begin navigating their options early in their collegiate experience (Jurgens, 2000; Soria & Stebleton, 2013).

One way of reaching this population is to offer courses that focus on assessment as well as major and career exploration (Bullock-Yowell, 2014; Parks, 2011). These courses may be taught by career counselors through the campus career center or by faculty who have an expertise in career development within their departments (Ledwith, 2014). For example, in this research study, I recruited my seven participants from an Academic and Career Planning course, which was organized through one of the major departments on campus. While graduate students normally teach this course, career counseling personnel also assist on several topics including assessment interpretation. Providing courses like this would promote the self-assessment as well as major and career exploration that many students in their freshmen year would find invaluable as they determine which path to pursue (Thompson & Feldman, 2010).

In addition to career courses, career counselors on college campuses purposely help students explore their major and career options, which can lead to fulfilling, satisfying, and enriching employment (Hartung & Taber, 2008). Since career counselors have a variety of resources at their disposal, undecided freshmen students could certainly benefit from entering the career center and meeting with their career counselor early on in their college experience (Maree, 2013). As discussed in the literature review, many counselors use quantitative assessments like the TypeFocus (Wood, 1997) as well as the Strong Interest Inventory (SII; 2004) to help undecided freshmen students explore their options, however, there is a growing need to incorporate qualitative career assessments as well, which can empower students to find meaning
and authorship of their own life stories (Maree, 2013). The following recommendations are for counselors who desire to incorporate both quantitative and qualitative assessments, like the Career Construction Interview (CCI; Savickas 1998, 2002, 2009, 2011a), into their career counseling practice.

**Recommendations for Implementing Both Qualitative and Quantitative Assessments**

On many college campuses, one of the ways that career counselors support students who are trying to decide on a major and career direction is through the use of career assessments (Garis, 2014; Hartung & Taber, 2008). One of the challenges that many career counselors face is providing assessments that promote a holistic perspective that is both understood and internalized by students rather than assessments that may not seem relevant to students’ lives (Armstrong & Rounds, 2010; McMahon & Watson, 2012). While many counselors may drift towards using solely quantitative assessment approaches due to time limitations (Hirschi & Lage, 2008), research has shown that incorporating both qualitative and quantitative approaches together ensures a more holistic assessment process for students, allowing them to be empowered to make wise career decisions throughout their lifetime (McMahon & Watson, 2012). As discussed in this study, the Career Construction Interview (CCI; Savickas 1998, 2002, 2009, 2011a), which is one type of qualitative assessment, when paired with other quantitative assessments, provides a more holistic perspective of an individual’s story, shifting the focus from finding a career to finding one’s self (Brott, 2004; Maree, 2013; McMahon & Watson, 2012). Ultimately, career counselors in the 21st century need not abandon the use of quantitative assessments, but rather, continue to incorporate qualitative approaches into their overall assessment practices in order to support students’ self-knowledge throughout their lifelong educational and career journey (Whitson & Rahardia, 2005).
Recommendations for Counselors Who Utilize the Career Construction Interview

Specifically, when utilizing the Career Construction Interview (CCI; Savickas 1998, 2002, 2009, 2011a) with college students, it is essential that counselors be aware of their own biases and “expert” mentalities, which could infiltrate the CCI process. As revealed through this study, many students come to meet with career counselors with the assumption that the counselor is the expert who is going to “tell them what they should do” after looking at their assessment results. Rather than interpreting quantitative assessment results, counselors using the CCI should help students listen to themes that occur in their stories, which shed light on themselves and provide a way to move forward in their career development (Savickas, 2011a).

Also, some students may struggle with recollecting past memories spontaneously in the midst of the Career Construction Interview (CCI; Savickas 1998, 2002, 2009, 2011a). If this occurs, it may be necessary for the counselor to use probing questions to encourage students to talk more in depth about their past experiences. For instance, if a student says that their first grade teacher was someone they admired (response to question #1), the counselor could follow up with questions like, “What was it about your teacher that you admired so much?” Generally, students are looking ahead toward their major and career decision, being future oriented, and reflecting on the past may take them initially by surprise. By asking additional questions and possibly giving examples, students hopefully will be able to connect better with their past experiences to create themes that have meaning for them in their present.

Finally, counselors moving from a quantitative process, where they are more of the expert in the discussion of assessment results, to having the student be their own expert for their results may be challenging for many counselors who do not use both types of assessment on a regular basis. By attending conference sessions related to the Career Construction Interview
(CCI; Savickas 1998, 2002, 2009, 2011a) as well as reading the growing number of journal articles that detail its uses (Barclay & Wolff, 2012; Di Fabio, 2012; Rehfuss, Corso, et al., 2011), counselors can continue to develop their awareness of the CCI so that it becomes more familiar and incorporated into settings such as college campuses. An excellent website to learn more about the CCI as well as download the assessment, articles, and other related resources for free is Vocopher (http://www.vocopher.com). In the future, through the increased utilization of the CCI on college campuses, students will feel empowered in their ability to construct their own career identity rather than relying solely on an “expert” for their input and career guidance (Grier-Reed & Skarr, 2010).

**Limitations of the Study**

There were several limitations in this study. First, while there were seven participants, sufficient for the suggested number for phenomenological research, it would have been preferable to have 10-12 participants. While there was saturation in the five themes, which surfaced from participants’ lived experiences of the Career Construction Interview (CCI; Savickas 1998, 2002, 2009, 2011a) process, it would have been interesting to see if additional themes or observations about the process would have surfaced as a result from a larger participant group. Second, even with the predetermined criteria for this study and the fact that participation was voluntary, all seven participants were White and five out of the seven were female. As the researcher, I would have preferred to have a more diverse group of students from different ethnicities and races as well as a well-balanced group of female versus male students. Third, as previously discussed, the fact that I was the sole career counselor who conducted both the CCI as well as the follow up interview about their experience using the CCI, students’ reports of this assessment might have been altered if they desired to “please” me versus being
transparent about their experiences. I believe that having another career counselor working with me throughout this process would have been helpful; however, at the time of this research study, no one else in my setting was as familiar or utilizing the CCI with students. Finally, due to my previous experiences as both an undecided student as well as a career consultant who specifically supports undecided students in their major and career selection, my personal bias and worldview could have been present throughout my interactions with all participants and may have affected the way they responded to my interview questions about their experience using the CCI.

Implications for Future Research

With the increasing awareness of qualitative assessment approaches such as the Career Construction Interview (CCI; Savickas 1998, 2002, 2009, 2011a), career counselors need to continue researching how the CCI can be utilized in a variety of ways to address the career development needs of the current generation of college students (Barclay & Wolff, 2012). Aside from conducting the CCI in individual appointments with students, more research needs to be done in how to facilitate this assessment within classroom settings, benefiting many students simultaneously. If research reveals that the CCI can benefit students’ career development in large group settings, this may accommodate counselors who may not have the time to conduct this assessment solely in a one-on-one basis but would have the time to conduct large group sessions. In addition, Barclay and Wolff recommended that future research examine the use of the CCI through online interventions, which would reach a wider audience of students and alumni. Being able to offer assessments like the CCI in a variety of ways, whether in large groups or virtually, would facilitate more students receiving this type of support as well as make the assessment process more manageable for campus career counselors who may have time restraints and not be able to conduct the CCI with every student in one-on-one counseling sessions.
Additionally, while this study provided a perspective of undecided freshmen students’ experiences using the CCI in their major selection, future research could examine students’ decision-making process throughout their college experience to see how the Career Construction Interview (CCI; Savickas 1998, 2002, 2009, 2011a) impacted their initial major selection, career exploration and final career choice upon graduation. A question could be, “If undecided freshmen students participate in the CCI process, do they choose majors and career options in less time and with more sense of purpose than undecided freshmen students who do not participate in this process?” Longitudinal studies focused on undecided students using the CCI could provide new insight to career counselors in how this assessment promotes authentic career and life planning for students throughout their college years as they prepare and plan for life after graduation. In general, their experiences, processes, and the use of career resources would provide incredibly helpful information for the field of career development.

Finally, in regards to the combination or sole use of quantitative and qualitative assessments, researchers could look at various control groups to see what major and career decision making patterns occurred. For example, one group of students could take only a quantitative assessment like the TypeFocus (Wood, 1997). Another group could take one qualitative assessment that the Career Construction Interview (CCI; Savickas 1998, 2002, 2009, 2011a). A third group could take a combination of both a qualitative and quantitative assessment, and a fourth group would not take any assessments. Researchers could examine each of these groups to see how the usage of such assessments aids in students’ major and career exploration as well as the similarities and differences among the four groups.
Conclusion

In light of the challenges that many college students face today, many career counselors have adopted a constructivist approach to facilitate the career development of their students (Rehfuss, Cosio, et al., 2011). To better assist these 21st century students, many counselors are moving away from the “scored” assessment approach and towards a “storied” approach with their students, which is focused more on identity and adaptability (Savickas, 2012). This assessment approach would complement millennial college students’ desire to grow in their identity and fulfill their desire to be adaptable to a variety of career paths throughout their lifetime (Fouad et al., 2006; Payment, 2008). Additionally, since the choice of a college major is one of the most challenging and important decisions a student will make during their college experience, it is essential to identify assessment approaches that best meet the needs of these students as they explore and narrow their areas of interest (Carduner et al., 2011; Porter & Umbach, 2006). While using quantitative assessments can be very beneficial to students who are exploring their personality and interests (Hirschi & Lage, 2008), qualitative assessments are growing in popularity and should be incorporated into the assessment process to provide for a holistic perspective of the student (Maree, 2013). As revealed through this phenomenological research study, using a qualitative assessment like the Career Construction Interview (CCI; Savickas 1998, 2002, 2009, 2011a) with undecided freshmen college students promotes an overall satisfaction and personalization within the assessment process, a growth in their self-awareness, a clearer understanding of how to make meaning from their past experiences, and an opportunity to consider their authenticity by going deeper into the understanding of who they are, where they have been, and how that might connect to their futures. Through the incorporation of this qualitative assessment approach within the major and career exploration
process, college students will be able to create their own self-defining stories and incorporate them into a life script replete with meaning and purpose (Hartung & Taber, 2008).

The road goes ever on and on,
Down from the door where it began.
Now far ahead the Road has gone,
And I must follow, if I can,
Pursuing it with eager feet,
Until it joins some larger way
Where many paths and errands meet.
And whither then? I cannot say.

(Tolkien, 1954)
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APPENDIX A

Participant Criteria Handout

Student Information
Your Full Name: _______________________________________________________________

UGA Email Address: ____________________________________________________________

Phone Number: ________________________________________________________________

Participant Criteria
(Read each question and respond by circling either Yes or No)

1. Are you a student who has not yet identified/chose an academic major?
   Yes    No

2. Are you currently a freshmen student?
   Yes    No

3. Are you willing to participate in both the Career Construction Interview and a follow-up interview two weeks later for research purposes only?
   Yes    No

4. Have you participated in classroom assessment interpretations of the TypeFocus and SII with a career counselor?
   Yes    No

5. Are you an enrolled student in the ECHD 2050 Academic & Career Planning Course?
   Yes    No

Description of Study
Suzanne Voigt is a Ph.D. student in the College of Education’s Counseling & Student Personnel Services program and is conducting qualitative research, which will require the participation of freshmen undecided students who are still determining their major and career direction. Students who participate in the study will have the opportunity to take an additional career assessment called the Career Construction Interview (CCI) which complements their Strong Interest Inventory and Type Focus results, providing a holistic view of their academic and career development. In addition to the Career Construction Interview, students who participate in this study will receive extra credit for their ECHD 2050 course. To receive the extra credit for this course, the student will need to go through the Career Construction Interview process with Suzanne and also return to meet with her for a follow-up interview, two weeks later, about their assessment experience. Students’ involvement in this research study for extra credit is on a first come, first served basis. 8-10 students are needed for this study and additional students who qualify for the study will be put on a waiting list in case any of the first 8-10 students who volunteered decide to withdraw from the study. Those on a waiting list or those who do not fit the criteria for this study may still go through the Career Construction Interview with Suzanne but will not receive extra credit for their ECHD 2050 course. Students who do not participate in the study for extra credit have a number of extra credit options of equal duration and effort to the extra credit received by students who do participate in the study. To earn credit for their ECHD 2050 course, students should check their syllabus or speak with their instructor for further information.

If you are interested in participating in this research study, please email Suzanne at (svoigt@uga.edu) or call (704-572-0028). Please send a copy of your completed questionnaire by email as an attachment or image. Once your questionnaire has been received, Suzanne will follow up with you about scheduling your Career Construction Interview as well as provide you with a letter of informed consent.
Script for Participant Recruitment

Hello, my name is Suzanne Voigt and I am a Ph.D. student in the College of Education’s Counseling & Student Personnel Services program. I am conducting qualitative research, which will require the participation of freshmen undecided students who are still determining their major and career direction. Students who participate in my research study will have the opportunity to take an additional career assessment called the Career Construction Interview (CCI), which complements their Strong Interest Inventory and Type Focus results. Looking at all three of these assessments simultaneously provides a holistic perspective of your academic and career development.

In addition to going through the Career Construction Interview, students who participate in this study will receive extra credit for their ECHD 2050 course. To receive the extra credit for this course, students will need to go through the Career Construction Interview process with me, which should take approximately one hour, and also return to meet with me for a follow-up interview, two weeks later, about their assessment experience, also approximately one hour. Students’ involvement in this research study for extra credit is on a first come, first served basis. 8-10 students are needed for this study and additional students who qualify for the study will be put on a waiting list in case any of the first 8-10 students who volunteered decide to withdraw from the study. Those on a waiting list or those who do not fit the criteria for this study may still go through the Career Construction Interview with me but will not receive extra credit for their ECHD 2050 course. Students who do not participate in the study for extra credit have a number of extra credit options of equal duration and effort to the extra credit received by students who do participate in the study. To earn credit for their ECHD 2050 course, students should check their syllabus or speak with their instructor for further information.

If you are interested in participating in this research study, please email me at (svoigt@uga.edu) or call (704-572-0028). Please send a copy of your completed questionnaire by email as an attachment or image. Once your questionnaire has been received, I will follow up with you about scheduling your Career Construction Interview as well as provide you with a letter of informed consent.

Thank you so much for your interest in participating in my research study! Do you have any questions?
APPENDIX C

UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA
CONSENT FORM
Title of Study: The Journey of Freshmen Undecided College Students Who Participate in the Career Construction Interview Process

Researcher’s Statement
I am asking you to take part in a research study. Before you decide to participate in this study, it is important that you understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. This form is designed to give you the information about the study so you can decide whether to be in the study or not. Please take the time to read the following information carefully. Please ask the researcher if there is anything that is not clear or if you need more information. When all your questions have been answered, you can decide if you want to be in the study or not. This process is called “informed consent.” A copy of this form will be given to you.

Principal Investigator: Dr. Pamela Paisley
Department of Counseling and Human Development Services
Email: ppaisley@uga.edu
Phone: 706-542-1812

Purpose of the Study
This research study is focused on the lived experiences of freshmen college students, who have not yet chosen their college major and who desire to participate in the Career Construction Interview process with a career consultant, Suzanne Voigt, at the UGA Career Center. After taking students through the Career Construction Interview process, Suzanne will be conducting an individual interview with each student participant and recording the conversation for her research purposes only. Confidentiality will be upheld and your pseudonym will be used during the interview. You are able to stop the conversation during the interview or withdraw from this research study at any time, no questions asked. During the interview, Suzanne will be asking you eight questions about your experience with the Career Construction Interview and interpretation process. Again, all responses are confidential and will only be used for Suzanne’s research purposes.

Study Procedures
If you agree to participate, you will be asked to:
• Complete a questionnaire to make sure you qualify to participate in this study
• Schedule and participate in the Career Construction Interview process, which will take place with the researcher at the UGA Career Center
• Bring the results of your TypeFocus and Strong Interest Inventory assessments to the Career Construction Interview consultation session. Your results will be utilized as supporting assessments during the Career Construction Interview process
• Schedule a follow up interview, two weeks later, once you complete the Career Construction Interview process with the researcher
• Commit approximately two hours to this research study. Participants will be required to participate in the career consultation using the Career Construction Interview, which will take approximately one hour and will be required to return for a follow up interview, which will last approximately one hour.

Additional information:
• All interviews will take place on campus at the UGA Career Center, office 212
• Interviews will be recorded using two types of app technology including VoicePro and iTalk. All recordings will be kept confidential and destroyed at the conclusion of the research study
• The researcher will be transcribing the recorded interviews and will send transcripts to participants to review for accuracy
• If participants would like to know the results of this research study, they can inform the researcher to relay that information to them once the study has been completed.

Risks and discomforts
At this time, the researcher does not anticipate any potential risks or discomforts of the participants who choose to volunteer for this research study. During the interview, participants may feel uncomfortable in answering some of the research questions. If discomfort occurs, the participant can choose to skip answering any question that he or she does not wish to answer. Participants may stop answering questions or discontinue participation in this research study at any time. Finally, the researcher will become familiar with the resources on the college campus, which may assist participants who experience psychological stress, academic and career concerns, etc. and also refer participants to such resources if needed. If during the Career Construction Interview or follow up interview, the participant shares any information that indicates harm to oneself (e.g., suicidal ideation) or to others (e.g., child abuse), the researcher will be required by law to report to the appropriate officials.

Benefits
• Participants will have the opportunity to go through the Career Construction Interview process with a Career Consultant and be able to identify meaningful themes, which may support them in their academic and career development.
• This study will provide a fresh perspective of how career counselors can utilize the Career Construction Interview with undecided college students as they explore major and career options in their freshmen year of their collegiate experience.

Incentives for participation
Participants who volunteer for this study and complete both the Career Construction Interview and follow up interview with the researcher will receive extra credit in their ECHD 2050 Academic and Career Planning Course. The researcher will contact the teacher of each ECHD 2050 course to inform him or her of students’ participation in order that they may receive their extra credit. Students who do not participate in the study for extra credit have a number of extra credit options of equal duration and effort to the extra credit received by students who do participate in the study. To earn credit for their ECHD 2050
course, students should check their syllabus or speak with their instructor for further information.

**Audio/Video Recording**
Two different apps will be used to record your interviews: VoicePro and iTalk. These recordings are needed for the use of transcribing the interviews. Recordings will be kept confidential throughout the research process. Upon completion of the research, these data files will be erased.

**Privacy/Confidentiality**
The researcher will be collecting audio recordings of participants, phone numbers, email addresses, full names, and pseudonyms of participants. All participant information will be kept private and confidential. Once the research study has been completed, all audio files and personal information will be erased and destroyed. Researchers will not release identifiable results of the study to anyone other than individuals working on the project without your written consent unless required by law.

**Taking part is voluntary**
Participation in this research study is voluntary. Participants may refuse to participate before the study begins and discontinue at any time, no questions asked. If you decide to withdraw from the study, the information that can be identified as yours will be kept as part of the study and may continue to be analyzed, unless you make a written request to remove, return, or destroy the information.

**If you have questions**
The main researcher conducting this study is Dr. Pamela Paisley a professor in the Department of Counseling and Human Development Services at the University of Georgia. Please ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you may contact Dr. Pamela Paisley at ppaisley@uga.edu or at 706-542-1812. If you have any questions or concerns regarding your rights as a research participant in this study, you may contact the Institutional Review Board (IRB) Chairperson at 706.542.3199 or irb@uga.edu.

**Research Subject’s Consent to Participate in Research:**
To voluntarily agree to take part in this study, you must sign on the line below. Your signature below indicates that you have read or had read to you this entire consent form, and have had all of your questions answered.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Researcher</th>
<th>Signature</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Participant</th>
<th>Signature</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Please sign both copies, keep one and return one to the researcher.
Thank you for volunteering to participate in this study. The purpose of this study is to examine undecided freshmen college students’ lived experiences of the Career Construction Interview process and consider the aspects of the CCI that prove to be most and least meaningful to students within the context of the interview and interpretation process. This study will provide a fresh perspective of how career counselors can utilize this tool with undecided college students as they explore major and career options in their freshmen year of their collegiate experience.

Again, your participation in this study is voluntary. You can refuse to participate or stop taking part at any time, no questions asked. You can ask to have all of the information about you returned to you, removed from the research records, or destroyed.

As a participant in this study, I will ask you to:
1. Review and complete a questionnaire and consent form;
2. Participate in an approximate 60 minute interview which will be audio-recorded;
3. Review the transcript and the identified themes from your interview.

Your participation in this study will only take approximately 2 hours. Upon completion of both the Career Construction Interview process and follow-up interview process, you will receive extra credit for your ECHD 2050 course. Students who do not participate in the study for extra credit have a number of extra credit options of equal duration and effort to the extra credit received by students who do participate in the study. To earn credit for their ECHD 2050 course, students should check their syllabus or speak with their instructor for further information.

Do you have any questions before we begin the interview?

Let’s now begin the interview. I will ask you some questions around your experience going through the Career Construction Interview process. I am interested in learning about your perspective of this assessment and where you are now in your major selection process. You do not have to answer any questions you do not want to answer and may stop this interview at any time.

Interview Questions
1. Tell me about why you decided to participate in the Career Construction Interview process in addition to the other career assessments that you took in class?
2. Describe your overall experience participating in the Career Construction Interview process?
3. What was the most meaningful aspect of the Career Construction Interview for you and why?
4. Which question on the Career Construction Interview did you most enjoy answering and why?
5. Which question on the Career Construction Interview was the most difficult to answer and why?
6. Compared to where you were prior to going through the Career Construction Interview process, where are you now in your major exploration process?
7. What, if anything, would improve the Career Construction Interview process for other freshmen students who were exploring majors at UGA?
8. Is there anything else about your experience using the Career Construction Interview that you would like me to know?
APPENDIX E

Contact Summary Sheet

Interviewee Name:
Interviewee Pseudonym:
Contact Date:
Today’s Date:
Length of Interview:

1. What were the main issues or themes that stuck out for you in this contact?

2. What discrepancies, if any, did you note in the interviewee’s response?

3. Anything else that stuck out as salient, interesting, or important in this contact?

4. How does this compare to other data collections?
APPENDIX F

RIASEC Model

Realistic
"The Doers"
- Hands-on
- Enjoys Outdoors
- Physical
- Dependable
- Practical
- Reliable
- Product driven
- Adventurous

Investigative
"The Thinkers"
- Curious
- Intellectual
- Scholarly
- Likes Science and Math
- Enjoys Analyzing
- Research Oriented
- Original Ideas

Conventional
"The Organizers"
- Organized
- Practical
- Careful
- Precise
- Tidy
- Structured
- Efficient
- Respectful
- Secure

Artistic
"The Creators"
- Creative
- Self-expressive
- Passionate
- Value Aesthetics
- Independent
- Open

Enterprising
"The Persuaders"
- Persuasive
- Competitive
- Leadership
- Ambitious
- Energetic
- Witty

Social
"The Helpers"
- Humanistic
- Helpful
- Collaborative
- Talkative
- Enjoys Groups
- Friendly
APPENDIX G

Career Construction Interview Questions

Opening Question: How can I be useful to you as you construct your career?

1. Who did you admire when you were growing up? Tell me about her or him.

2. Do you read any magazines or watch any television shows regularly? Which ones? -
   What do you like about these magazines or television shows?

3. What is your favorite book or movie? Tell me the story.

4. Tell me your favorite saying or motto.

5. What are your earliest recollections? I am interested in hearing three stories about things
   you recall happening to you when you were three to six years old.