The Role of Emotion in the Construction of Career in Parent–Adolescent Conversations

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The role of emotion in the construction of career has not always been clear despite its importance in people's lives and in counseling. Recent conceptualizations suggest that emotion is a complex relational process that is socially constructed. This study illustrates the role of emotion in the construction of career from an action theory perspective. Two parent–adolescent conversations about career from a group of 14 conversations are analysed in detail to demonstrate the ways in which emotions serve to energise action and career and lend context and meaning to the process of constructing career in the family setting.

The role of emotion in career development theory and research has been largely neglected despite its fundamental role in people's meaning-making activities and their capacity for personal change (Young, Valach, & Collin, 1996). Moreover, as a social phenomenon, the place of emotion in these processes has also been devalued. Hence, the often personal, uncertain, ambiguous, and challenging undertaking of constructing career (in our culture, schools, and families) has become "objectified" and "reduced" to both an individual and a cognitive phenomenon characterized by information gathering, decision making, problem solving, and evaluation.

The purpose of this article is to illustrate the role of emotion in the construction of career, using parent–adolescent career conversations as the basis for the illustration. It is based on an action theory approach to career development (Young et al., 1996) in which career is seen as being constructed through everyday action, "perhaps largely through language, in conversation with others" (p. 486). Action is understood as intentional and goal directed, although not necessarily always rational. Meanings and constructions about career are negotiated through joint actions, such as conversations, as well as through projects with others. Project refers to medium-length processes comprising individual and joint actions. Within these actions and projects, unique emotional and relational experiences serve to contextualize people's "lived" constructions of career (Larson & Richards, 1994).

In this theoretical perspective, emotion has a place in the individual's internal processes; it is also an important dimension of needs, plans, goals, and purposes; and it serves as an energizer and motivator of action. Specifically, in this approach, emotion functions at three levels: first, at the goal level to influence meaning (e.g., a mother's conversation with her son is impelled by her sadness because of his decision to quit school); second, at the level of strategies to influence the conduct of the action (e.g., her resolve to "stay with" her son through the conversation despite her disappointment with his decision); and finally at the self-regulation level to regulate one's own behavior during the action (e.g., faced with the son's strong emotional outburst during the conversation, she subconsciously adapts by exercising greater self control). Counselors' recognition and use of emotion as part of career-related actions and projects are contingent on the availability of detailed illustrations of these functions.

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The theoretical perspective illustrated here is reflective of recent conceptualizations of emotion in which emotion and cognition are intertwined aspects of a unitary, socially constructed process (Frijda, 1986; Mahoney, 1991; Powers, Welsh, & Wright, 1994). Rather than an exclusively intrapsychic and internal process, emotion is a complex, relational one, consistent with both the layperson's implicit theory of emotion and common linguistic allusions to feelings (Campos, Campos, & Barrett, 1989; Frijda, 1986). As relational action tendencies, emotions can be seen as serving to establish, maintain, or disrupt a relationship with the environment in the form of a readiness to act (Frijda, 1986), suggesting that people's goals and intentions deserve considerable attention.

One's subjective understanding of interpersonal events takes on a prominent position in this new understanding of emotion (Campos et al., 1989; Dix, 1991; Frijda, 1986; Powers et al., 1994). Subjective understanding of an interpersonal event is multidimensional, including feeling states associated with the event, an appraisal of the purpose or intent of the event, and an appreciation of the significance of the event (Campos et al., 1989; Powers et al., 1994). Indeed, Campos et al. indicated that one manner in which interpersonal events become meaningful or significant to a person is through appreciating the relevance of an event to the goals and strivings of that person. Emotions can generate important information about the meaning of events and motivate our behavior in potentially adaptive ways (Frijda, 1986; Greenberg, 1993).

Dix (1991) noted that parent–child interaction is a context in which strong emotions, both positive and negative, are likely to be aroused, because the achievement of each person's goals depends on the coordinated actions of the partner. He suggested that parents formulate plans and appraise behavior to ensure that outcomes that matter to them occur. It is likely that adolescents engage in a similar process (Powers et al., 1994). Kobak and Duehmler (1994) asserted that when emotions are successfully managed, parent and adolescent can engage in cooperative conversation about the adolescent's goals and plans for the future. Ultimately, the frequency of episodes of mutual anger is greatly reduced if parents are able to adopt children's goals as their own (Dix, 1991).

Contemporary attachment theory has informed one line of research that implicates emotion in parent–adolescent relationships and career-related outcomes (Blustein, Prezioso, & Schultheiss, 1995). Parental attachment, which includes the feeling of being emotionally close to one's parents, was also found to be a significant predictor of career search self-efficacy (Ryan, Solberg, & Brown, 1996) and career self-efficacy, orientation, and realism (O'Brien, 1996). Mothers' own childhood attachment strategies are predictive of their emotional regulation during conversations with their teenage children, particularly in discussions of the adolescents' goals and plans for the future (Kobak, Ferenz-Gillies, Everhart, & Seabrook, 1994). Although attachment theory is primarily a theory of emotional development (Magai & Hunziker, 1993) and includes reference to emotions, it does not broadly identify specific and differential emotions that may function in a variety of ways in constructing career.

Not unrelated to attachment theory is the research on family systems, which represents another way emotion in research on career development in adolescence is addressed. In a number of empirical studies, family system variables, including family dysfunction, have been related to vocational identity (Lopez, 1989; Penick & Jepsen, 1992), career indecision (Kinnier, Brigman, & Noble, 1990), and career search self-efficacy (Ryan et al., 1996). A third line of research on family and careers that supports the proposition that individuals enact family-of-origin dramas in work (Chusid & Cochran, 1989; MacGregor & Cochran, 1988; Zimmerman & Cochran, 1993) implicates emotion in the development of these prototypical dramas in families as well as in their transference to work situations.

These lines of research allude to the relevance of the emotional climate in the family as a salient variable in family relationships and career development. However, none of these studies identify the different ways in which emotion functions in familial relationships, and, in particular, they do not elucidate the way in which emotional processes in families serve to energize specific career-related actions, such as conversations. Our study was intended to demonstrate that emotions serve to energize action, project, and career and lend context and meaning to the relational process of constructing career in parent–adolescent conversations. It was designed to illustrate how emotions function to shape one's relations, constructions, and actions.

METHOD

The research procedure used in this study is closely allied to the theoretical approach and the purpose of the study (Young, Valach, Dillabough, Dover, & Matthes, 1994). This method, which involves the videotaping and replaying of conversations parents and adolescents have about career, allows both the participants to see the manifest behavior of the conversation in which emotions are evident. By playing the videotape back for each participant separately immediately following the conversation and stopping it every 45 seconds for participant input, the participant is able to recall both short- and long-term internal processes, including emotions. Thus, it is not only the conversations that provide the data for analysis but also the meaning that the participants assign to them, including intentions, goals, and emotions related to goal-directed action.

Participants

Fourteen parent–adolescent dyads (6 mother–daughter; 4 mother–son; 4 father–son) responded to local newspaper advertisements and notices posted in schools, churches, and community centers and participated in a research project on career development. The parents' mean age was 42.41

years (SD = 4.08). Thirteen of the parents had some postsecondary education, and 7 were divorced or separated. The adolescents' mean age was 14.86 years (SD = 1.79); all but 1 (in college) were high school students. All the participants were White and resided in the metropolitan area of a large Canadian city. Each participant individually indicated his or her willingness to volunteer for this study, and informed consent was obtained before the data-collection procedure.

Procedure

The procedures comprised four parts: first, a warm-up session for the parent, adolescent, and two researchers; second, a videotaped conversation between the parent and adolescent; third, the playback of the videotaped conversation for each participant individually; and, finally, about 3 weeks later, a feedback session based on the analysis of the transcripts (see Young et al., 1994; Young et al., in press). The interviews occurred in a room set up for that purpose on a university campus.

Before the parent–adolescent conversation, two research interviewers, from among four graduate student research assistants, held a warm-up interview in which the adolescent was asked about his or her career and life goals and current interests. Parental comments on how he or she had influenced these goals and interests were also elicited. Eventually the focus of the warm-up session was on current issues and salient, on-going discussions between the parent and adolescent relevant to career and life goals. The parent and adolescent were then invited by the two research interviewers to have one of these conversation without the researchers present. This conversation was videotaped and was terminated at the discretion of the participants.

Immediately after the parent–adolescent conversation, each participant separately viewed a playback of the conversation with one of the two research interviewers who conducted the warm-up interview. During the playback the participant was asked to report on his or her thoughts and feelings during the conversation. Specifically, participants were invited to stop the videotape playback when they had something to say. Alternatively, the researcher stopped the videotape every 45 seconds and asked, "What were you thinking or feeling during this part of the conversation with your (mother/father; son/daughter)?" This "self-confrontation procedure" was designed to reveal participants' thoughts and feelings at the time of the conversation. Subsequently, the conversation and the self-confrontation procedure were transcribed by a professional secretary, and two narratives, one representing each person in the conversation, were written by the researchers who conducted the interview in conjunction with the first author (Young) and in counsultation with the third author (Valach) on the basis of the analysis of the data described below. The narrative accounts were presented to the participants both individually and jointly to ascertain their authenticity and utility. The participants confirmed that the narrative accounts were accurate; at the conclusion of this interview, each participant received a $20 honorarium.

Analysis

The initial analysis of the transcribed data involved four steps involving the four members of the research team who had collected the data working with the first author and consulting the third author (Young et al., 1994; Young et al., in press). The first step focused on the identification of the overall intentional framework of each participant based on a thorough reading of the transcribed data. The purpose here was to identify each participant's most general intention for the conversation. In the second step, the conversation was divided into sections that represented each participant's distinct goals for that section and stemming from, and related to, his or her general intention. During these first two steps, the labeling of the action was primarily descriptive, and the labels originated from the language of the participants themselves. The final two steps of the initial analyses involved a microanalysis of the transcripts. In the third step, the researchers coded the intentional means or functional steps the participants used to reach their goals. In the fourth step, the actual words, phrases, and expressions used in the dialogue were categorized. Subsequently, each transcript and analysis were reviewed for the identification of the joint actions engaged in by both participants. Finally, the steps in this process were enhanced by additional viewings of the video record and re-reading the transcripts. The analysis resulted in the identification of the joint actions of parents and adolescents, reported elsewhere (Young et al., in press).

Subsequent to this detailed analysis, we chose two parent–adolescent cases for inclusion in this study as the richest examples of the role of emotion in the construction of career. We determined this through a line-by-line analysis of transcribed text of the parent–adolescent conversations and self-confrontation interviews, revealing those instances in which the participants most readily and frequently disclosed their feelings to one another in the conversation and to the researchers during the self-confrontation procedure. Beyond the transcribed texts, nonverbal cues and interpersonal dynamics observed during the videotaped warm-up conversation with the researchers, followed by the actual parent–adolescent conversations, also revealed impressions of the intensity level, tone, and overall quality of the exchange, that is, the extent to which the conversation was uneven or smooth. Finally, additional information gleaned from the warm-up conversations also served to contextualize the parent–adolescent conversations that followed them.

RESULTS

Not all of the parent–adolescent conversations demonstrated the role of emotion in the construction of career in the same way. For example, there was variability in emotional tone, ranging from apparent emotional neutrality and objectivity (i.e., one's emotions are seemingly under control

and thus qualitatively "invisible") to being peppered with varying degrees of emotional support, and from satisfaction to tension, conflict, and emotional duress stemming from the nature of the parent–adolescent relationship.

The following two cases illuminate the role of emotion in the construction of career during parent–adolescent conversations.

The Joneses

The "Joneses," a mother and her 16-year-old daughter, engaged in a somewhat conflictual conversation about potential job choices at the present time and career choices in the future, and about the daughter's personality disposition. From all data sources, it became apparent that the mother conveyed rather concrete or explicit constructions about what it takes to be successful in developing a career. She frequently used herself and her experience as the yardstick for comparison with her daughter. In the self-confrontation procedure after the conversation she noted, "I was an overachiever in the sense that I did more than I was capable of and stressed myself out doing it. She's (the daughter) an underachiever; whereas I would overextend myself, she holds back," and "I'm a lot more personally, personality-wise I'm more goal-oriented. You go and just get there, no matter what. And she's so different than that. And she doesn't, I haven't heard her have a goal yet. Except with her cheerleading and that was all . . . but she blew it." Throughout, it becomes notable that the daughter is considered lacking in many respects. The mother experienced dissatisfaction, disappointment, and concern about the long-term implications for the daughter's career path.

In the warm-up conversation, the mother dispassionately points out that she is concerned about her daughter's "total lack of direction," her "lack of focus," her "not even knowing what the next 3 years hold." She says to her daughter, "You have very little ambition and no aspirations so far." In observing the videotaped conversations, it seemed that the mother adopted a posture of "objectively" evaluating her daughter's career status. She was seemingly unaware of how this affected her daughter who, at times, appeared to be embarrassed and hurt.

Although the mother may have been well-intentioned in voicing her observations, they were experienced quite negatively by her daughter. Overall, she tended to emphasize her daughter's deficits rather than her strengths. However, even when she did acknowledge the latter, the daughter tended to respond only to the perceived criticism. Perhaps it is not surprising that there was a palpable tension between mother and daughter, in which mutual challenging ensued. Although the daughter put on a rebellious face, underneath she experienced the criticism as painful and she would have deeply appreciated having her mother's approval. The opening lines of the conversation serve as an illustration (Lines 1–10; M = mother, D = daughter):

> M: So want to talk? What was I just saying about your potential? Do you know what I'm referring to? (D: No.) You do have potential. (D: I know.) You've worked hard in the past, and you're bright. You have a lot of interests. You have good skills with people. I don't know how creative you are because you've never really taken an interest in being creative so I don't know if that's there or not. Last year, you blew it because there was other things on your mind, you wanted to do other things.
> D: Don't you think I'm doing okay this year?
> M: I don't know yet.
> D: Well, last term I'm saying. Don't you think I've done good last term?
> M: You were kicked out of school. (D: Mother!) No, I don't know yet. (D: gives her a "look"). Okay, sorry. I don't know yet, but I know how hard you're working, I mean there's no doubt about that. All this year, you've worked hard.
> D: Yeah, but I just want to hear you say that my last term was A-okay.

Ultimately, the daughter seems to largely reject her mother's lifestyle, values, standards for success, and criteria for career choice in favor of developing her own, stressing that a specific career choice should be social, flexible, and not boring. Her apparent departure from her mother's perspective gives her mother concern:

> I worry about that, her saying, I don't want to be bored. Because I've said that all along. And she doesn't understand that it's okay to be bored, not necessarily bored, but you don't have to be overstimulated all the time. And so I've had that struggle just as I'm saying here, with constantly looking for stimulation and challenge but never being totally relaxed, which she always comments on. She doesn't want a life like mine where I seem to be working all the time. So I don't know how she's going to find, she doesn't want to be bored, she says what I say, but I don't want to be like you.

The mother's concern may not be unwarranted. Her observation that her daughter does not want to be like her seems especially meaningful to understanding this mother–daughter relationship and the conflicting constructions of career. Indeed, the daughter's construction of career is in part a function of her emotions and her relationship to her mother. Career is about rebelling, defiance, and anger, especially after having observed her mother work all the time, be divorced, and raise her daughter largely on her own. Negative modeling has strongly influenced the daughter's long-term goals. She states that she plans on being the antithesis of her mother. She does not want to work all the time or get married.

Relevant to this was a fairly intense exchange during the warm-up conversation concerning the issue of how the mother has influenced her daughter, with the daughter being reluctant to concede that her mother has had any direct influence on her. After the daughter's vehement statement concerning work and marriage, the mother exclaims in dismay, "So this is how I've influenced you!"

The mother's direct attempts to influence her daughter continue to be a perpetual source of frustration. Herein lies the core interpersonal struggle between mother and daughter, with the daughter striving to be her own person despite the mother's concerns and attempts to persuade the daughter to be more like her, that is, focused, achievement-oriented, and so on. During the self-confrontation interview, the mother confides to the researcher, "I'm upset that she's

ignoring me." She is distraught that her well-intentioned efforts as a career agent are undermined. From the mother's perspective, emotions function at the goal level to influence the meaning the daughter attributes to her future. Briefly stated, she wants something *for* her daughter. The daughter's emotions function at the level of strategy. They have more to do with her response to her mother, both within the conversation and at other times. The daughter wants something *from* her mother and attempts to address her mother's emotional influence at the goal level.

The different functions of emotions for the mother and daughter compromise both the mother's effectiveness and the quality of the relationship between them. The mother attempts to exert influence or be an agent to her daughter's career, that is, criticism as opposed to emotional support and encouragement. For instance, during the self-confrontation procedure, the daughter observes her own discomfort early in the conversation (Lines 1–10) and indicates that she is aware that she does not meet her mother's standards. She copes with her mother's direct and indirect criticisms by choosing to shut her out. She states:

> I think that I was thinking that I really, like, . . . see how I was really fidgeting and everything, I was really bored 'cause I've heard all this before so many times. There are just so many people who tell me that "you've got so much potential." Don't you think that's a put down? Like I'm not—like right now I'm not, like, why am I not good enough? or—you could do better. So I kind of ignore it.

Ultimately, mother and daughter demonstrate rival constructions of career characterized by interpersonal conflict. The daughter voices a concern with preventing boredom and the need for a busy social life, which she perceives as being unlike mom, in contrast to her mother's hope for her to become focused, goal-oriented, and hard working. Even when both mother and daughter share similar affective criteria for career choice "to not be boring," their relative meanings differ. The mother constructs lack of boredom as stemming from satisfying and challenging work, the daughter from being social and flexible. Thus, even when there is an opportunity for establishing some common ground, they remain on different wavelengths.

"Common ground" may be elusive given their inherently different or rival constructions of career. The daughter takes into account lifestyle considerations in contrast to the goals her mother emphasizes (i.e., working hard, having goals, being responsible, etc.). For instance, the daughter actively considers teaching because it is a flexible occupation with abundant vacation time. Toward the end of the conversation the daughter indicates she is definite about choosing to be a teacher, insisting that she feels comfortable and satisfied with this decision.

Evident in this segment of the conversation is a joint construction of affective criteria relevant to the decision-making process; that one should experience a sense of comfort, fit, or rightness about choosing one's career. One experiences satisfaction and confidence, as opposed to doubt or uncertainty, when the choice is considered to be right. In the self-confrontation session, the daughter confides to the researcher that she is excited about finding some direction, as well as possibly achieving paternal approval and support for herself and for her mother:

> Now I started to think right after she said, "Are you going to tell your Dad," I started to get excited . . . Yeah. Yeah, so I was getting excited just telling my good news . . . especially since I went with my mom.

The Smiths, Senior and Junior

In contrast to the previous example, we see in this conversation between a father and his 13-year-old son the construction of joint emotion in influencing career decisions. The father and son appear to have a mutually supportive relationship with one another; they share many interests and activities together, considered an important feature in maintaining family cohesion. They also demonstrate shared rather than contrasting or rival constructions of career. This affords them many opportunities to share common ground during their prolonged conversation in which joint career exploration is engaged in, taking the form of the son rejecting numerous choices his father and he generate as either uninteresting or too scary. Commiserating about the implications of a recent major family financial setback is also a dominant theme in their conversation.

The metaphor of "common ground" seems particularly salient and meaningful in illustrating both the father–son relationship, which is supportive, caring, respectful, and egalitarian, and the quality of their conversation, which is smooth and includes both father and son sharing ideas readily, regularly taking turns, and building on each other's contributions to the conversation. From the warm-up conversation, it becomes apparent from the father that establishing common ground is not something that just happens by chance but is something that the family consciously values and strives for. A sense of community, involvement, and participation is instilled in the family through a love of music and other shared activities, such as soccer. When the researcher asks the son how his father has influenced him, what stands out for him is that his father is his soccer coach, he is a talented musician, and both are "trekkies." This level of direct, face-to-face involvement is also evident in the son's disclosure that he and his father have many opportunities to have meaningful conversations like the present one. He indicates:

> We talk about some specific area for hours and hours . . . way past midnight. But we do have conversations like this but they're extended for hours—we may be watching TV or something or eating dinner.

Beyond academic achievement, it seems that the family promotes a construction of the "balanced" or "well-rounded individual." For instance, the father takes pride in his son's accomplishments, and he is explicit that music is viewed as a hobby, not as a career choice for the son. Indeed, it seems that the construction of the well-rounded individual entails the ability to manage different worlds with ease. The father indicates in the self-confrontation session that moni-

toring how one manages one's relationships becomes a meaningful goal in life. He feels enormous pride in how adept his son is at managing his interpersonal relationships.

Being a well-rounded individual entails specific skills, such as explicit attention to emotional regulation (of self and others). Indeed, interpersonal sensitivity for other's feelings is modeled by the father during the conversation. For example, a course of action is suggested to ameliorate the possibility that the other two sons share perceptions of inequity that "Jr." gets to go to band-camp and they do not.

Beyond the notion of the well-rounded individual with transferable skills, a "pro-education" stance to career is constructed. For example, when the father initiates more explicit career exploration and decision-making activity in the conversation, this leads to the discussion and rejection of numerous professions, such as engineer/drafting, musician, teaching, business, and politician, that require a prolonged commitment to a university education. Several affective criteria, for example, "boring," "not exciting," and "scary," were significant in determining whether a choice was deemed suitable (Lines 53–60; F = father, S = son):

F: So could you see yourself doing anything like metalwork or drafting?
S: I couldn't see myself doing anything like metalwork. I could see myself doing something like drafting, but it's kinda boring. Like, I enjoyed it, and I did really well in it but I wasn't really excited. I did it well, I did it—
F: What about engineering or architecture? 'Cause those are sort of like combining intellectual skills of drafting.
S: Yeah, I did a bit of that last year.
F: You don't sound exactly enthusiastic.
S: It wasn't overly challenging.
F: No rockets going off.
S: No challenge, and I don't know.

The father is satisfied that his son is currently undecided about his career and evinces pride in how he handles the process of career exploration. At this point, the process rather than the outcome of career exploration and decision making is explicitly valued. This is relevant to the father's implicit construction of "normalcy," based on age and stage of career development. At 13 years of age, how one goes about making choices is important, but making a career choice at this point may be considered premature. "Jr" is considered "on-time" by his father. On the basis of this, the father expresses optimism that his son will eventually achieve a clearer picture of what he wants from a range of "possibles."

However, imagining the son violating the tacit expectation of a university education brings to the foreground how critical education is perceived and suggests how far the parameters of parental support for the son's career choices extend. This implies that the "common ground" currently shared by father and son is not invulnerable to threat. The father discloses:

> There is certainly a strong culture in our family about education and the importance of going to school. Of course his mom and I are really very pro-education. 'Cause a job is only a very small part of your life. . . . It's very clear, unstated . . . of course you're going to go to university. . . . Well, he's bought into it, but if for any reason he decided not to buy into it, it might be very uncomfortable for him to express that because there's such a very strong culture-value system. I've always thought that I would let my kids do whatever they wanted to do and I would encourage them to do whatever they wanted to do . . . as long as it's exactly whatever I want them to do!

Threats to the educational career can come from within and without. Indeed, it is recognized that launching an "educational career" is an expensive endeavor. It is a highly valued goal that both father and son perceive as being precarious at times. There is a great deal of effort made to manage or cope with mutual anxiety around financial demands and pressures not being met and thereby jeopardizing the "dream." Lack of money can compromise the lofty educational career that father and son aspire to. Both are loathe to voice this possibility, although fears about meeting future educational fees are alluded to (Lines 93–99):

F: Yeah, I can tell you I have all sorts of questions about what you're going to do when you get older.
S: What?
F: Well, I do worry about the money.
S: So do I.
F: Because we're just getting started and the fees are just incredible.
S: It's all very overwhelming next year. Plus I have fees for a few other courses too—scary.
F: Well, we've gotta do it . . . somehow.

Money, a recurrent issue, is also viewed with some ambivalence—at times it is deemed absolutely necessary to reach short-term goals, such as band camp and school fees, and long-term educational goals, such as university, yet the father also indicates in the warm-up conversation that "money isn't everything, only one of the things you live for." How one lives and learns is important: "No shame in failing, only in giving up." Having inadequate finances may violate the father's construction of his role as providing monetary support for the son's educational career. Denial that lack of finances may be a real obstacle to the joint construction of a university career or alternatively, mutual reassurance that they will manage the situation, is evident at times: "Everything will be okay" and "Money appears when we need it." The father attempts to compensate for the intense anxiety around the implications of their financial straits with emotional support for the son's long-term needs. For instance (Lines 185–207):

F: Do you think it's money that's the biggest impediment that stands in our way?
S: No. I don't know, it's been . . .
F: We've always found it somehow.
S: Yeah, it's been a problem, but I mean—
F: We always manage.
S: Yeah, we haven't, I mean we're not really . . .
F: . . . starving.
S: Yeah, we're not really dying of starvation or uncomfortability. We're still living.
F: So you feel reasonably confident that you're going to have the options that you want?

In reflecting on this segment of the conversation, the son indicates that he feels reassured by his father:

So I was just thinking that money's not going to be one of the obstacles for us in the future. (Interviewer: You seem pretty confident about that). Well, I'm pretty confident about my father's ability.

Reminiscent of the way in which the father expresses pride in his son, the son also indicates a sense of trust and security in his father that everything will work out in the future. Implicit is the notion that the father will fulfill a social contract or a shared construction of the father's role as "financier" to their "dream" of a university education.

DISCUSSION

This research shifts attention away from the individual to a perspective that emphasizes the importance of shared understandings, shared emotional states, and joint goals and actions in the projects and careers parents and adolescents construct together (Collins & Russell, 1991; Dix, 1991; Larson & Richards, 1994; Macoby, 1992; Thompson, 1993; Young et al., in press). It extends previous work on family and adolescent career development (e.g., Blustein et al., 1995; Ryan et al., 1996; Zimmerman & Cochran, 1993) by illustrating how emotions function in career-related actions.

The parents and adolescents whose conversations are illustrated here revealed both short-term goals (e.g., to maintain the conversation) and long-term goals (e.g., to secure a university education) that varied in their level of personal investment and emotional intensity. Consistent with recent conceptualizations of emotion (Campos et al., 1989; Frijda, 1986) and the place of emotion in parenting (Dix, 1991, Kobak & Duehmler, 1994; Powers et al., 1994), our analysis suggests that the recognition of the parent and adolescent having shared or joint goals, as well as individual goals, holds enormous significance for the emotional quality of the parent–adolescent conversation and for the emergent constructions of career. Similarly, the functions that emotions serve also influence the quality of the conversation. Certainly, the Smiths demonstrate that parent–adolescent conversations go more smoothly when shared goals (e.g., emotionally supporting one another during a financially difficult time, jointly pursuing extracurricular activities, and pursuing a postsecondary education to attain a professional occupation) are evident. The phenomenon of joint goals is inextricably intertwined with the mutual co-construction of career as encompassing the adolescent's personal, socioemotional, and educational development in a variety of settings, including family, extracurricular activities and sports, high school, university, and professional setting, over time. Attention is also given to co-constructing the nature of the son's career identity as a "balanced" or "well-rounded individual." Relevant to this, what the son values, is interested in, is excited by, and the common characteristics shared between father and son are explored and validated. Not only are shared constructions and goals associated with mutual feelings of satisfaction, stemming from positive appraisals of self, other, and the process; in the case of the Smiths, the emotions function commonly between them at the level of strategy to influence the conduct of the conversation as well as at the level of goals or shared meaning.

In contrast, the Joneses demonstrate how rival constructions of career and mutual feelings of tension and disappointment arise when parent and adolescent do not share similar goals. This conversation is also indicative of emotions functioning at different levels of the conversation for each person and thus contributing to the difficulty between them. Although at one level mother and daughter may share the same goal of identifying career goals for the daughter, they differ on how this can be achieved. The mutual feelings of tension center on how much the daughter chooses to be different and separate from her mother, who consistently attempts to persuade her daughter "to be more like me." The manner in which the mother responds to the daughter's autonomy-related goals results in the daughter feeling frustrated, unsupported, and angry, motivating her to shut her mother out. This is reminiscent of Kobak et al.'s (1994) findings that adolescents have difficulty discussing goals and their plans for the future with "preoccupied mothers" who tend to be anxious and intrusive, often redirecting conversation to their own concerns.

The notion that emotions are implicated in our goals and strivings also suggests that emotions serve to regulate and control action (Campos et al., 1989; Frijda, 1986). Internal processes are relied on to make moment-to-moment decisions about one's actions (Young et al., 1996). The Smiths are explicit about how "emotional regulation" (of self and others) is fundamental in striving to become an interpersonally sensitive and well-rounded individual, a process considered critical to attaining success in both career and relationships.

The process of emotions in regulating and controlling action is also implicitly embedded in conversation. Indeed, the Joneses demonstrate how anger sustains the daughter's concerted and conscious efforts to rebuff her mother's attempts to influence her in favor of discovering her own values, standards for success, and criteria for career choice. The anger compels the daughter to distance herself from her mother, to discover her own voice and path. In response to this, the mother experiences concern that her daughter is jeopardizing her own self-interest, which motivates her to persist in advice-giving, designed to promote her daughter's chances for career success. Unfortunately, the mother's anxiety fosters action steps, that is, challenging and questioning, that are intended to shift the daughter's perspective but create defensiveness instead. Parental anxiety can be debilitating when adolescent long-term goals and plans are paramount (Kobak et al., 1994).

It should be noted that the Joneses' anger and anxiety exemplify emotions that can easily be characterized in terms of action readiness and facial expression. Some emotions may be accompanied by distinctive facial expressions and some may not. In this case, the urgent character of the emotion, defined by its function in the conversation, is represented facially. Other emotions, such as pride or jealousy, are defined more clearly by the situation, story, or script,

and, in this instance, the social constructions of career. They may not have characteristic facial features, expression, or action tendencies (Frijda, 1986). Certainly, the prevailing emotion of pride that resonates throughout the Smiths' conversation demonstrates how pride is an extension of shared career constructions, contributing to a narrative of current and anticipated successes, despite economic hardship. The father's pride in his son may imply an awareness of where the son should be in attaining developmental milestones; the positive appraisals suggest that the son has surpassed the father's expectations. The father's pride allows him to monitor his son's progress at a comfortable distance, not interfering but admiring and encouraging.

Emotion's role in energizing and motivating action (Frijda, 1986) is also implicated in the emotional criteria used in career exploration and decision-making activities. Both families make explicit how "career possibles" are appraised emotionally. Those choices adolescents and parents appraise as scary, boring, or not fun or exciting are considered undesirable. Alternatively, those career possibilities deemed exciting and challenging are perceived as having the necessary "passion" to spur the adolescent into the action required to pursue that choice and to sustain the adolescent's interest over time. Emotion identifies where to focus joint attention, suggestive of what is personally important to the adolescent (motivation) and what the adolescent believes about him or herself (cognition).

Enhanced understanding of emotion's role in parent–adolescent conversations about career is indicative of several implications for counseling practitioners. First, much of traditional career counseling has focused on the individual, in which personal aptitudes, interests, and personality traits are explored (e.g., Holland, 1985). Our findings propose that adopting an action perspective, by involving both parent and adolescent in career-focused exploration, is a rich opportunity for practitioners to observe how parent and adolescent act jointly. Practitioners can design interventions that promote joint goals and constructions of career, resulting in more emotionally supportive relationships. In the videotaping and playing back of conversations between parents and adolescents in counseling, they could see career-related action first hand, become more aware of the internal processes, including emotions, that accompany and guide the conversation, as well as those that provide meaning for long-term goals. If the counselor has the opportunity to provide parents and adolescents with written feedback about their conversations in the form of narratives, greater recognition of both individual and social goals may be grasped, as well as giving voice through writing to each person and his or her role in the action. Other means of accessing internal processes, including emotions, in parent–adolescent career-related actions are through the use of diaries and other self-monitoring procedures, including short reaction forms about emotional state during or immediately after specific actions, such as those used by Larson and Richards (1994). These means will allow clients as well as counselors to become more cognizant of the place of emotion in actions of this type.

Although all of Greenberg's (1993) six reasons why emotion is important in counseling apply to career counseling as well, the one that stands out as particularly salient on the basis of this study is the relation between emotion and action. It is only by understanding how emotions function in particular actions that one can begin to understand their place in the construction of longer term processes, such as projects, as well as their importance in the change process. As counselors, we no longer need to confine our understanding and use of emotion to its cathartic role. In intentional, goal-directed action, emotion can be seen to self-regulate, to energize goals, and, in a functional way, to enhance the actions in which we participate.

This study is limited in that it is based on one parent–adolescent conversation per dyad. The need to understand how emotion contributes to the construction of career as well as the potential of this research method can be enhanced in further studies that focus on and gather data from family career development projects that span several months and involve a range of data. It may even be possible to identify "emotional projects" characterized by the particular salience of emotion in them, and thus trace the development of emotional competence and social performance for career. The purpose of this article was better served by providing a sufficiently detailed illustration of two case examples rather than report group data for the whole sample. Further studies may provide group data as well as limit the age range of adolescents to 2–3 years.

This study of the place of emotion in parent–adolescent career conversations illustrates an aspect of people's everyday experience and its relationship to the construction of career in families. It furthers the understanding of the action theory approach to career (Young et al., 1996) by illustrating the functions of emotion as an energizer of goals of the action, a guide of strategies in the action, and a means of self-regulation during the action.

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