

THE IMPACT OF A NARRATIVE INFORMED INTERVENTION ON  
CAREER DECISION SELF-EFFICACY AND  
OCCUPATIONAL ENGAGEMENT

BY

Craig R. Beeson

The University of Kansas

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Thomas S. Krieshok – Chairperson

---

Tamara Coder Mikinski

---

Bruce Frey

---

Suzanne Rice

---

Kristen Hensley

Date Defended: \_\_\_\_\_

The Dissertation Committee for Craig R. Beeson certifies that  
this is the approved version of the following dissertation:

THE IMPACT OF A NARRATIVE INFORMED INTERVENTION ON  
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Committee:

---

Thomas S. Krieshok – Chairperson

---

Tamara Coder Mikinski

---

Bruce Frey

---

Suzanne Rice

---

Kristen Hensley

Date approved: \_\_\_\_\_

## DEDICATION

I want to dedicate this dissertation to the memory of Michael White who passed away April 4, 2008. His work, writings, conferences, and workshops inspired me to engage in therapy in ways that respected people the way I would want to be respected if I were a client. His down to earth humility was matched by his gentle understandings that would shape generations of therapists. I found a heart and care in his work and saw the authenticity for myself as I traveled to Mexico for a world narrative conference or drove for 8 hours to one of his workshops in Indiana. I feel honored to have walked and talked with him and now am inspired to continue in the narrative heritage that he began.

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## ABSTRACT

This study investigates the contribution of the narrative approach to career counseling that addresses the changing nature of work facing those seeking career services. To analyze this, 84 students in a career exploration course were divided between those who received the treatment as it had been done in the past and those who received the treatment plus the narrative perspective and interventions. A repeated measures ANOVA was performed and found a significant effect across time but no significant interaction effects. This did not confirm either of the hypotheses that the narrative additions would significantly increase above that of the treatment-as-usual group: a) the students' occupational engagement as measured by the OES or b) the students' career decision self-efficacy as measured by the CDSE scale. This study raises awareness for the need of further investigations into the narrative and other constructivist perspectives in career counseling.

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# CHAPTER I

## Introduction

“I got a story, It's almost finished;

all I need is someone to tell it to; maybe that's you.”

“The World You Love” (Adkins, Linton, Burch & Lind, 2004, track 5)

“And I wasn't looking for heaven or hell, just someone to listen to stories I tell”

“Stories I Tell” (Phillips, 1991, track 11)

Storytelling is an integral part of the human experience that has only recently found its way into the realm of psychological theories and the helping professions. In fact our very understanding of ourselves and the way we organize and construct our world is narrative in form. According to Bruner (1990), “...a narrative, after all, is not just a plot...but a way of telling” (p. 123). This telling or construction of personal stories has recently been utilized as the foundation for narrative therapy, a relatively new but valuable way of helping individuals, groups, and communities. This study adds to the growing body of literature that investigates the contribution that the narrative perspective has in the helping professions.

By drawing from Bruner's (1986) work on narrative identity, Foucault's (1980) understanding of power/knowledge, feminism, literary theory, and social constructionism, Michael White and David Epston wrote the seminal text of narrative

therapy entitled *Narrative Means to Therapeutic Ends* (1990). This book is one of the major landmarks in a movement that has had a great impact not only on the field of marriage and family therapy (Monk, 1996), where it originated, but also in social work (Kelley, 1996), psychology (Lynch, 2000), and more recently in career counseling (Brott, 2005; Bujold, 2004; Chen, 1997; Cochran, 1997; Krieshok, Hastings, Ebberwein, Wettersten, & Owen, 1999; Savickas, 2001).

In career counseling, the narrative perspective is one of the proposed solutions to the gaps left in the traditional methods most commonly practiced today. Many career practitioners today are still caught in the wake of Parsons' (1909) true reasoning approach. In this approach, a person's ability to reason is used to find the match between their personal traits and a particular occupation. Holland's popular theory of person-environment fit (1997) is an excellent example of this model. Several groups have pointed out the limitations of this approach, most notably those researchers and theorists that fall in the constructivist/social constructionist camp.

Constructivism and social constructionism are sometimes used to refer to a similar group of ideas and at other times used to refer to different groupings of ideas. Both philosophies reject the notion that there is a single reality that can be objectively known (Rodwell, 1998). However, these positions often differ in their focus. Constructivism focuses on the cognitive and purposive structuring of reality, while social constructionism focuses on the linguistic negotiation and social nature of knowledge construction. The narrative perspective is based on notions included in both constructivism and social constructionism. In this paper I will use the term



constructivism to refer to the foci of both constructivism and social constructionism and refer to a conceptualization of narrative that specifically fits under the umbrella formed by these two overlapping philosophies.

This focus on individuals' construction of meaning and societies' influence on this meaning construction is the major piece missing in the previous approaches' attempts to address career concerns. Pioneers such as Cochran (1997), Bujold (2004), Young and Collin (2004), Brott (2001), Krieshok et al. (1999), and Savickas (2001) have offered theoretical critiques of traditional approaches to career counseling. They have also explored ways that using a narrative framework and constructivist perspectives can be useful to modern career services and vocational theories in addressing those critiques.

Young and Collin (2004) argue that a narrative perspective is emerging in career counseling because practitioners have been looking for an approach that is closer to the personal experiences of clients than previous approaches. They conclude that this perspective addresses the gulf between theory/research and practice/social policy. Likewise, Savickas (1995) believes that constructivist/narrative methods address the subjective client experience that was missing in previous approaches. Bujold (2004) remarks that career theories, even the emerging ones, do not take into account the complex, multilayered, and internally contradictory nature of vocational choice that narrative methods do. Brott (2001) agrees with Bujold that previous approaches tend to oversimplify the process of career decisions. She goes on to say that the narrative, or what she calls "the storied

approach,” addresses this by being more client-driven and inclusive of individual interactions. Constructing life narratives around careers should also enable people to be more adaptive in their career decision-making as is called for in Krieshok, Black, and McKay’s work on occupational engagement (2008). In addition, the narrative approach also addresses some of the criticisms that the commonly used trait-factor approaches fail to address. These include issues arising from living in a more transitory post-industrial society (Brott, 2001; Chen, 1997).

In order to address the impact of the addition of the narrative perspective two concepts that should be of particular relevance to career interventions are career decision self-efficacy and occupational engagement. Career decision self-efficacy has been recognized as a staple in career intervention outcomes (Blustein, 1989; Hackett & Betz, 1982; Hackett, Betz, Casas, & Rocha-Singh, 1992; Ryan, 1999; Taylor & Popma, 1990). A narrative intervention should increase self-efficacy by not only helping people build a stronger, more confident story, but also by providing a supportive group to witness the changes occurring in the individual. As adaptability becomes more important in the career counseling literature (Eggerwein, Krieshok, Ulven, Prosser, 2004; Phillips, 1997; Super & Knasel, 1981), engagement is emerging as a particularly relevant concept in the occupational exploration process (Krieshok, Black, & McKay, 2008). Focusing on narratives and the constructivist perspective on career counseling should provide the reflection that enhances the personal meaning found in being involved in career related activities (Peavy, 1994). The connection of action to personal meaning of clients should enhance the richness of the engagement

experiences that students seek and thus make them seek more in an ongoing lifelong process.

In this study, these effects will be explored by providing a narrative informed intervention to career exploration courses for freshman and sophomore students. These courses were chosen because they provide natural platforms on which to learn about the impact of a narrative career group intervention. In these courses, students are exposed to career exploration activities. During these courses narrative concepts and activities will be introduced and their effects on career-related outcomes will be investigated. This study intends to investigate and gather understandings of one application of narrative therapy to career counseling. Specifically, this study asks: Does adding a narrative framework that includes specific narrative activities to a career exploration course for college students increase career decision self-efficacy and engagement in the career exploration process? A quasi-experimental design utilizing a treatment-as-usual group and a value-added narrative group will be used to compare the groups on two career related outcome measures through a repeated measures analysis of variances (ANOVA).

## CHAPTER II

### Literature Review

While vocational researchers have been touting it for years, the different face of the typical career trajectory has been revealed in stark nakedness through the harsh light of the recent economic downturn of late 2008 early 2009. Job loss has been reported as the worst in 34 years (Isidore, 2009) and a number of particular industries have been targeted forcing many to find new areas of work. This is an extreme example of a trend toward job instability, multiple transitions, and a lack of predictability that has become the norm for modern workers (Savickas, 2000). Many have called for new approaches to adapt career counseling to this reality instead of simply relying on approaches derived from the century-old work of Parsons (1909). His approach relied on reasoning to find the best fit between persons and careers. Clients would then use their capacity for reason to explore their individual traits such as abilities, interests, and limitations and then match them to particular occupations. This trait factor theory lives on in more current theories such as person-environment-correspondence (Lofquist & Dawis, 1991). Holland's typology (1997) is the most commonly utilized assessment approach by career counselors and it is based on this theory of person-environment-correspondence (Krieshok, Black, & McKay, 2008).

While this theory and subsequent approaches have served the field and clients well for many years, they are insufficient to address the recent changes in the world of work. These traditional approaches assume outdated norms of a stable work environment and a slow progression up the corporate ladder in any particular

profession. They do not address the job instability and the frequent transitions workers make in today's workforce.

Vocational psychologists call for new directions in dealing with those seeking to explore their career future. According to Savickas (2000), two positions have formed to adapt to the changes and move vocational approaches forward. The two approaches, objectivism and constructivism, both attempt to address the changes by supporting adaptability. They differ, however, in their emphasis. Objectivism intends to continue developing and changing the existing measures and approaches while constructivism aims to propose a new direction where subjective meaning within career clients is the new focus.

#### *Constructivist and Narrative Approaches*

Those who support this newer constructivist approach are reinventing the way career counseling is viewed. According to Peavy (1995), the focus in career counseling should change from self-presentation to self-construction, career choice to life-planning, and self-as-traits to self-as-narrative. This narrative aspect is the core of the constructivist approach (Brott 2005) and is also delineated in narrative therapy. The narrative therapy approach brings together the ideas from constructivist theory with new insights from family therapy and combines them with progressive career counseling ideas (Campbell & Ungar, 2004a). This brings together the often separate fields of vocational psychology and mental health counseling. According to Polkinghorne (1988), narratives are the primary way that people make meaning in their lives and that people are primarily meaning-making organisms. This

construction of meaning is done primarily through narratives constructed through language and in relationships (Campbell & Ungar, 2004a). It is also multi-storied in that there are multiple stories that could potentially be told, drawing from multiple cultural stories in individuals' social context. Thus, the essential thrust of narrative therapy, as a particular branch of constructivist approaches, is the conceptualization of clients' lives as stories and the telling and re-telling of these narratives through collaboration of clients and counselors (Cochran, 1997).

The narrative approach in career counseling addresses the important gaps that traditional career counseling misses in dealing with the changes in the work environment. The meaning that people strive to make out of their work lives and engagement with people as a whole is much better handled with the more existentially oriented narrative theory. It focuses on overcoming restraints or barriers and embraces uncertainty and change (Campbell & Ungar, 2004b). Paradoxes that often abound in career planning such as individuals' hope for a planned adventure or guided improvisation are better addressed with the narrative approach (Bujold, 2002). Narrative therapy also takes into account that meaning making is a social construct that takes place in a particular culture (Young & Colin, 2004).

While some authors have recently developed specific narrative methods to address the concerns cited above, more work needs to be done to add to the options of specific interventions that utilize the narrative framework. One specific intervention framework that utilizes the narrative perspective comprehensively in career counseling is that of Campbell and Ungar (2004b). This approach organizes career

counseling into seven aspects. Each aspect fits into one of Cochran's (1997) episodes and covers tasks or topics to be covered with clients seeking career related help. The seven aspects are: (a) know what you want, (b) know what you have, (c) know what you hear, (d) know what constrains you, (e) map your preferred story, (f) grow into your story, and (g) grow out of your story. Each aspect lists constructivist processes or tasks to be addressed such as constructing new stories, identifying internal and external voices that support the preferred future, and performing new stories in front of an audience.

Contributions to narrative approaches to career counseling have often come directly out of family therapy and more specifically out of White's (2007) work at the Dulwich Centre. Concepts such as mapping preferred stories were translated into career interventions by Campbell and Ungar (2004b). Concepts of de-construction were incorporated into Brott's (2001) storied approach. Savickas (1993) and McIlveen and Patton (2007) suggested the idea of co-authoring clients' stories collaboratively as part of constructivist career counseling. All these ideas and interventions are drawn from the narrative interventions used in family therapy introduced by White (2007). One area that is emphasized in both narrative family therapy and narrative career counseling is the need to draw on community influences and support. This is an area that has been neglected in narrative career interventions.

One tool that addresses this need for a community response to client's developing stories is outsider-witness practices. White (1995) applied Anderson's (1987) work in reflecting teams and improved it by infusing a narrative perspective

into the practice. These practices engage in the complex, subjective experience of clients by enabling people to access newer versions of themselves that become available through the reflection of their story being heard and reflected on by an audience of peers. The process, which includes three parts, begins with a particular client who is interviewed by a helping professional. He or she shares the story of the new identity he or she is constructing. An audience then reflects, through another structured interview, what parts of the story resonate with them and how the conversation has moved them to a new place of understanding. The original speaker is then interviewed about the impact of hearing the others react to and be moved by his or her story. Outsider-witness practices have yet to be applied in the career counseling arena. These practices should, however, have particular relevance in addressing the subjective experience, the complex nature of vocational choice, the need to develop an adaptive career decision-making style, and locating them in the context of community.

#### *Adaptability and Engagement*

As the world of work changes and career counselors struggle to provide useful interventions for those who seek their services, it is evident that one of the key components to include is adaptability. One of the first to notice the importance of career adaptability was Super and Knasel (1981). They argue for encouragement of this new concept as a way for individuals to express their desire to make an impact on the environment and address the environment's (especially in careers) constant flux. As vocational psychologists struggle to continue updating their approaches to meet



the demands of the changing world, many have added their own additions to the concept of adaptability. Herr, Cramer, and Niles (2004) formulated a series of specific adaptive skills that are foundational to personal flexibility. Mitchel, Levin, and Krumboltz (1999) advanced a concept of planned happenstance that takes advantage of chance events in a person's career journey. The five pillars that those seeking career assistance are encouraged to develop are: curiosity, persistence, taking risks, optimism, and flexibility. Blustein (1997) suggested that career clients should be able to tolerate ambiguity and develop exploratory attitudes and skills. He also points out the field's shift from a maturity model to an adaptive model. O'Connor and Wolfe (1987) described a series of stages that are part of inevitable career adaptation. One moves from stability through a crisis onto redirection and finally, into restabilization.

Another important development in the career adaptability research is the concept of engagement found to be useful through qualitative analysis of individuals undergoing work transitions (Ebberwein, Krieshok, Ulven, & Prosser, 2004). They found that "adaptive individuals get off to a good start, think about and plan for their future, anticipate change and react when they see it coming, are cautious about stopgap employment, and know how to achieve realistic goals" (p. 304). This lay the foundation for the development of an approach that put engagement as one of the cornerstones of a trilateral model of adaptive career decision-making (Krieshok, Black, & McKay, 2008). Engagement, in this way, is different from career exploration. Exploration is gathering information in service of making an adaptive

career decision while engagement is a process of continually gaining experience and information that expands options and prepares for future adaptation (Krieshok et al., 2008). This idea of continually expanding the informational and experiential fund so that adaptive decision making can be made continuously is based on the anti-introspectivist (AI) approach to career decision making advanced by Krieshok (1998).

This AI view suggests that much of decision making is not made solely on the basis of rationality, but also includes a hefty dose of intuition or automatic cognitive processing. Krieshok's (1998) view is drawn from findings in cognitive and experimental social psychology that suggests most decisions are made at the cognitive unconscious level (Epstein, 1994). In fact, according to Nisbett and Wilson (1977), individuals have almost no insight into their higher order cognitive process and when asked reasons for their decisions, are often wrong. This suggests that typical career approaches are limited in their reliance on "true reason" to make career decisions and not acknowledging intuitive influences. Pacini and Epstein (1999) began separating and measuring the different thinking styles involved in making decisions. They called the more intuitive thinking style experiential and compared it to a rational thinking style. Krieshok et al. (2008) asserts that both styles are essential for vocational decision making which is shown in their trilateral model of adaptive career decision-making. The three legs this model stands on are intuition, reason, and engagement.

In his article on the AI model, Krieshok (1998) lays out a series of implications for the reinvention of career counseling practices arising from the AI

argument. Among them are calls to allow clients to become more flexible instead of rushing them toward a decision, utilizing the benefits of barriers instead of avoiding them, and encouraging more experiential interventions instead of standard forms of occupational information. The latter one is essentially a call for students to be more engaged in the process. Activities such as attending workshops, job shadowing, and informational interviewing could increase the fund of unconscious resources that client's intuitive processes and emotions could draw from. This is essentially the continuous engagement described above that goes beyond simply finding out information in order to make a specific decision.

In order to begin researching engagement in the lives of career seekers, Krieshok et al. (2008) began developing a scale based on the engagement leg of the trilateral model called the Occupational Engagement Scale (OES). The OES is a behaviorally anchored scale that measures the extent to which individuals participate in activities that represent engagement in occupationally related activities. It has taken on several forms in its development from the Occupational Engagement Scale for College Students (OES-C) (Black, 2006), the Occupational Engagement Scale for Employed Adults (OES-EA) (Scott, 2006), the Occupational Engagement Scale for Employed Adults-Revised (OES-EA-R) (Noble, 2008), the Occupational Engagement Scale for Creative Students (OES-CS, McKay, 2007) and most recently the Occupational Engagement Scale for Students (OES-S) (Cox, 2008).

The first formulation was published in Black's (2006) work on the OES-C. In devising the measure, Black administered 68 items to 300 participants. Through

exploratory factor analysis the 68 items were narrowed to a scale that consisted of 24 face value items. These items were rated on a behavioral Likert type scale that ranged from 1 (I've never given any thought to doing this) to 6 (I do quite a bit of this). Black found through analysis four factors that arose from his scale. The four factors consisted of networking, attunement, flexibility, and enrichment and when utilized together made up the Global Engagement factor. While the study did have low test-retest reliability for the Global Engagement factor, it does provide support for the operationalization of engagement in an objective measure.

Scott (2006) built on this work and developed a scale targeted at employed adults (OES-EA). The items were changed to reflect the employed adult stage and the Likert scale was reduced from 6 to a 5 ranged scale. Scott utilized 2 factors (Job Curiosity and Job Involvement) in his scale with 9 items each. After administering the scale to 323 participants, he found that the scale provided evidence for the validity and utility of the OES with employed adults. Noble (2008) continued the validation and establishment process by investigating the OES-EA-R. She administered the scale to 262 participants and found two factors of Job Curiosity and Job Involvement.

Another measure validating the concept of occupational engagement is the OES-CR developed for and validated on creative high school students (McKay, 2007). McKay validated her measure on 262 adolescents who were part of a project to increase the career engagement of creative adolescents. Her scale is a 28-item measure that consists of three subscales: attunement, enrichment, and exploration. Her internal reliability (Cronbach's alpha coefficient) was .90 and builds more

construct validity for the concept of engagement and the trilateral model (Krieschok, et al.)

Building on this scale, Cox (2008) developed a scale that was targeted at student engagement (OES-S). Student engagement, according to Cox, includes activities that are purposive and academic toward the goal of academic success. The scale attempts to improve on previous versions of the OES by adding new items and changing the response options to 1 (unlike me) to 5 (like me). It also reduced the 57 items he used down to 24. The OES-S utilized 5 subscales which include: personal/social development, science and technology, general education, vocational preparation, and intellectual skills. In a study with 311 participants, Cox found that the OES-S was a psychometrically sound instrument that improved on the limitations described earlier by Black (2006) in his study with the OES-C. These studies provide further evidence not only for the operationalizing of engagement, but of the use of the trilateral model and the AI perspective. It also provides an excellent newer measure to evaluate the effectiveness of career interventions.

#### *Career Decision Self-Efficacy*

Another important measure for evaluating career intervention that has become a standard in vocational psychology is the Career Decision Self-Efficacy (CDSE). The CDSE is based on social cognitive theory advanced by Bandura (1977). His theory contains two components: self efficacy, which is the confidence in one's ability to complete a specific task or behavior, and outcome expectations. Bandura also found that when self-efficacy expectations were low, related behaviors were

avoided and when self-efficacy expectations were high, approach behaviors increased. Self-efficacy research grew and entered vocational psychology first through Hackett and Betz's (1981) work with understanding women's career development based on Bandura's self efficacy theory. Others started using self-efficacy theory in other areas of vocational psychology such as in the Social Cognitive Career Model (Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 1994), and measures focused on general occupational self-efficacy (Betz & Hackett, 1981), self-efficacy with Holland themes (Betz, Borgen, & Harmon, 1996), and career decision making (Taylor & Betz, 1983). The CDSE scale is the product of this last article and is a strong predictor of career exploratory behavior specifically in late adolescence and early adulthood (Bluestein, 1989). Following from Bandura's (1977) finding, Taylor and Betz (1983) found that lower scores on the CDSE lead to more avoidance of career decision tasks and behaviors, while higher scores led to approach toward career decision making tasks and behaviors. As Swanson and Gore (2000) assert "the successful application of self-efficacy belief measures to other career-relevant behavioral domains is likely to result in important recommendations for practicing career professionals" (p. 248).

#### *Career Class Interventions*

Career interventions have taken a variety of forms in their attempts to impact students and others who are undecided or seeking careers. Career courses in college are of special note because college students as a population are often in special need of career interventions. They feel pressure to account for the education they receive, are often undecided, and may lack confidence in their ability to make career decisions

(Metz, 2005). This may be linked to the relatively high rates of students dropping out from college. Career courses have also been shown to be more effective than individual counseling and other interventions. When analyzing 52 studies between 1950 and 1980 with 11 types of different career interventions, career class or group interventions were found to have largest effect size ( $d=1.11$ ) (Spokane & Oliver, 1983). A follow-up meta-analysis that included studies from 1980-1983 with more finely tuned analyses found similar effects (class interventions,  $d=2.05$ ) to the previous study (Oliver and Spokane, 1988). This was contradicted by a more recent meta-analysis that analyzed the more recent studies not included in the previous two meta-analyses. After updating their methodology, Whiston, Sexton, and Lasoff (1998) found a much lower effect size for class interventions ( $d=.15$ ) compared to other interventions such as individual counseling ( $d=.75$ ). A meta-analysis done by Ryan (1999) brought a longer range perspective on the subject. Studies were included from the three meta-analyses mentioned above. Ryan found a larger effect size for career class interventions ( $d=.43$ ) than individual counseling ( $d=.41$ ) but smaller than group interventions ( $d=.55$ ). Brown and Krane (2000) reviewed these meta-analyses for which components made career interventions effective. They suggested that interventions that included at least three of the five specific components increased the effect size dramatically ( $d =.99$ ). The components were: “(1) written exercises, (2) individualized interpretations and feedback, (3) world of work information, and (4) modeling opportunities, and (5) attention to building support for choices within one’s social network” (p. 744).

Whether or not class interventions are the most effective intervention, they are still an effective form of career intervention. In Folsom and Reardon's (2003) meta-analysis on the design and accountability of college career courses, it was found that 34 of the 38 output studies reported positive results. They went on to state that they found that 90% of the studies demonstrated gains in vocational identity, career decision making, or other variables. In terms of other outcomes, such as satisfaction and retention, 87% reported positive effects. Krieshok (1998) suggests that career classes may be especially effective because they force students to think weekly about career related material for a longer time than many other career interventions. These career classes might also be effective because they often incorporate many of the specific components that Brown and Krane (2000) argued were valuable to effective career interventions. While Folsom and Reardon (2003) have aptly summarized the studies that analyzed the effects of career class interventions, a few studies bear mention because of their relevance to the current study.

Many of the studies targeted whether career courses would impact career decision self-efficacy. For example, McWhirter, Rasheed, and Crothers (2000) found that a nine week career education class that targeted self-efficacy, outcome expectations, and addressed barriers did in fact increase students' motivation to pursue careers that utilized their skills. Another study that highlighted a career class intervention's impact on career decision self-efficacy found no significant change in CDSE (Weisman, 1988). Quinn and Lewis (1989) found an increase in career certainty in their course that incorporated career instruction. While the



preponderance of the evidence shows some positive effects of these career courses, more research needs to be done to understand which classes tend to increase CDSE. The CDSE scale was chosen in this study to help locate it in the general tradition of outcome research on career exploration courses.

### *Summary*

This review of the literature provides the background to the present study in several areas. It shows how the constructivist and more specifically the narrative approach to career counseling have provided new ways to address the changing nature of the world of work and worker trajectories. It goes on to delineate the roles that adaptability and occupational engagement have in modern career interventions. Also included is how career decision self-efficacy has become an important and useful concept to evaluating the success of career interventions. Career class interventions were of special focus as they are a particularly useful way to reach college students with career interventions.

This study aims to investigate the addition of the narrative framework in a university career class intervention. The particular intervention incorporates Campbell and Ungar's (2004b) seven themes, outsider-witness practices (White, 1995), and other general narrative thematic elements. It is hypothesized that adding a narrative framework to a career exploration course for college students will increase both career decision making self-efficacy as measured by the CDSE-SF scale (Taylor and Betz, 1983) and occupational engagement as measured by the OES-CR (Krieschok, et al, 2008).

## CHAPTER III

### Methods

This treatment-comparison study poses two research questions. First, does adding components informed by the narrative perspective to a treatment-as-usual career exploration course significantly improve participants' belief in their ability to select careers as measured by the Career Decision Self Efficacy Scale-Short Form (CDSE-SF)? Second, do the additional narrative components significantly increase the improvement in students' engagement in the career exploration process as measured by the Occupational Engagement Scale-College Student Revised (OES-CR)? This section details the participants, measures, procedures, and data analysis that relate to the research questions above.

#### *Participants*

The sample consists of 84 undergraduate students, of which 47.6% (n=40) were in the treatment-as-usual condition while 52.4% (n=44) were in the narrative condition. These students participated in a semester-long career and college major exploration course at a large university in the Midwestern United States. They were selected through convenience sampling and consisted of freshmen and sophomore students who chose to take a course that includes career exploration components. They completed questionnaire packets at the beginning and end of their course. Participants ranged in age from 18 to 26 with a mean of 19.14 and their year in school was split into 38.1% (n=32) first years, 45.2% (n=38) second years, and 15.5% (n=13) third years. Of these individuals, 65.5% (n=55) were female while 34.5%

(n=29) were male. In regard to racial and ethnic categories, 85.7% identified themselves as Caucasian, 6% as Black/African American, 2.4% as Asian American, 2.4% as American Indian, and the remaining groups constituted less than 3% of the sample.

Generationally, 17.9% (n=15) reported being a first generation college student while 79.8% (n=67) reported they were not first generation college students. In regard to mother's educational level, 2.4% (n=2) reported a level of some high school, 15.5% (n=13) reported a high school diploma or GED, 16.7% (n=14) reported some college, 7.1% (n=6) reported an associate's degree, 36.9% (n=31) reported a bachelor's degree, 17.9% (n=15) reported a master's degree, and 1.2% (n=1) reported a doctoral degree. In regard to father's educational level, 2.4% (n=2) reported an educational achievement level of elementary school, 1.2% (n=1) reported some high school, 11.9% (n=10) reported a high school diploma or a GED, 10.7% (n=9) reported some college attendance, 2.4% (n=2) reported attaining an associate's degree, 41.7% (n=35) reported receiving a bachelor's degree, 23.8% (n=20) reported a master's degree, while 3.6% (n=3) reported a further category of "other".

When considering students' level of decidedness on any particular major (see Table 1), 50% (n=42) of the students said they were initially decided on a major at the beginning of the course while 48.8% (n=41) claimed they were undecided. Of the decided group, 10.7% (n=9) marked that they "could easily change," 11.9% (n=10) marked that "it would not surprise me if I changed," 23.8% (n=20) marked that they were "fairly sure this is the major I want," and 3.6% (n=3) marked "I can't imagine

changing majors.” Of the undecided students, 7.1% (n=6) marked that they were “pretty sure about what [they were] going to major in,” 15.5% (n=13) marked they had “narrowed it down to just a few things,” 13.1% (n=11) marked they were “not freaked out about it,” and 13.1% (n=11) marked that they “don’t have a clue.”

Table 1

*Level of Decidedness*

Major selected (50.0%)	Undecided (48.8%)
Could easily change (10.7%)	Pretty sure about major (7.1%)
It would not surprise me if I changed (11.9%)	Narrowed it down to just a few things (15.5%)
Fairly sure this is the major I want (11.9%)	Not freaked out about it (13.1%)
I can’t imagine changing majors (23.8%)	Don’t have a clue (13.1%)

*Measures*

*Demographic questionnaire*

To help understand the impact of different demographic variables, a questionnaire was created. Items included age, sex, first generation college student, undecided status, level of decidedness in their career choice, year in school, parents’ education levels, and ethnicity.

*Career Decision Self Efficacy-Short Form (Betz & Luzzo, 1996)*

The CDSE scale is a 50-item scale that measures participants’ confidence in their ability to meet certain career decision competencies in five different areas

(Taylor & Betz, 1983). These five areas, originally postulated by Crites (1961), include accurate self-appraisal, gathering occupational information, goal selection, making plans for the future, and problem solving. These subscales were found to have alpha coefficients of .71, .78, .83, .77, and .69, respectively (Taylor & Betz, 1983). The CDSE has been shown to be negatively correlated with career indecision ( $r = -.44$ ) (Taylor & Betz), thus adding to its construct validity. A six-week test/retest reliability of .83 was found by Luzzo (1993). In the group originally tested with the CDSE, a high level of internal consistency reliability was found with a coefficient alpha of .97 (Taylor & Betz). Most of the items (43 of the 50) were at a .50 or higher correlation with the average of the scale. While the five subscales had rather high coefficient alphas (.86-.89), Taylor and Betz concluded that because of the considerable overlap of scales, the measure was better thought of as a general domain of career decision tasks and behaviors rather than broken down into their separate subscales.

In this research, the 25-item CDSE-Short Form was used because of time constraints. It has been shown to be nearly as reliable as the 50-item CDSE (Betz, Klein, & Taylor, 1995; Betz & Luzzo, 1996). One of the weaknesses that critics of this scale have reported is that its reliability and validity measures have been based solely on college students (Luzzo, 1996). This, however, will not impact this study because it involves college students. This measure could be an excellent means of measuring the impact of the narrative intervention because it measures efficacy

expectations which are likely to change as new versions of clients' selves become available through the narrative process.

*Occupational Engagement Scale-College Revised (Krieshok, Black, & McKay, 2008)*

The OES-CR is a recently developed tool that is designed to measure one's engagement or participation in the career exploration process. It is based on a theory of career adaptability developed by Krieshok, Black, and McKay (2008). This theory incorporates narrative ideas, making it an ideal measure to better understand narrative interventions. The response options are worded in terms of behavior because they are intended to support the trilateral model of adaptive career decision-making that posits that reason, intuition, and behavior contribute mutually to adaptive career decision-making (1: I've never given any thought to this, 2: I've thought about this, but don't know if it's something I'd actually do, 3: I've decided to do this, but haven't done it yet, 4: I used to do this, but not anymore, 5: I do a little of this - or - I recently started doing this, 6: I do quite a bit of this - or - I've been doing this for quite awhile). The pilot study that yielded the first version of the OES-C yielded an overall alpha of .86 (Black, 2006). After this initial pilot study, Black surveyed 300 college students with a 68 item version of the OES-C. After analyzing the data via exploratory factor analysis, four subscales arose with 6 items each for a total of 24 items which included: Networking, Attunement, Flexibility, and Enrichment. Black found that the Total Score Cronbach's Alpha was .86 while the subscale scores varied from .71-.79. Reliability for the Total Global score on this version of the OES-C was .62 for Test/Retest reliability.

### *Procedures*

Participants enrolled in the career exploration course entitled “Career and Life Planning” were divided into 10 discussion groups of 7-12 students each. Half of these groups were selected for the narrative informed intervention, while the other groups were selected for a more traditional career intervention that did not include narrative elements. Three group leaders were selected to be trained in the narrative additions while the other three leaders were not trained in the narrative additions and ran the group in a similar manner to previous years. Students were assigned to the sections based on times and days that fit their course schedule. During the semester-long course, each group met 15 times for approximately one hour each for a total of approximately 15 hours.

Groups were led by staff of the University Career Center or graduate students in Counseling Psychology who had training in career counseling. Facilitators were trained by a staff member at the University Career Center who organizes the career course content. In addition, narrative training was done by the primary investigator and included an introduction into narrative theory, outsider-witness practices (Russell & Carey, 2004), and the seven aspects of life/work design (Campbell & Ungar, 2004). Facilitators kept a log of the activities conducted in their classes. This was employed to check the fidelity of the interventions implemented in the individual groups.

Prior to the interventions, all groups took the CDSES-SF, the OES-CR and filled out the demographic questionnaire. During the termination process of the groups, the students took the CDSES-SF and the OES-CR a second time.

The more traditional career intervention groups began their classes with a discussion of their previous jobs, career decisions, influences, successes, and failures. Students then engaged in activities to help them explore values, interests, personality, college majors, career myths, and goals. In order to enable the participants to explore their interests, Strong Interest Inventory (SII) reports were interpreted for each student, including an explanation of Holland's person-environment fit theory with accompanying activities. Personality influences were explored through an interpretation of students' Do What You Are (DWYA) report, a Myers Briggs-based instrument and computer report that gives participants a report relevant to college students. An activity was also included that helps students understand Myers Briggs typology. In order to explore college majors, a card sort listing all the majors at the students' institution was used. Students were asked to sort the cards into three piles of how interested they were in each major. A next-steps worksheet or an action plan paper was then completed and discussed to help the students put their goals into words. Participants were also asked perform and write about an informational interview, write a resume, take a tour of the college career center, create an occupational family tree, complete a lifeline activity, and learn about engagement resources on and off campus.



In the narrative informed intervention, most activities were similar to the traditional career intervention. They included all the activities listed above with a few substitutions. At the beginning of this intervention, the facilitator introduced the group to narrative concepts and provided a narrative framework for the course. Then, instead of a discussion of their previous jobs, career decisions, influences, successes, and failure, the students were invited to write a paragraph in the third person detailing the moments that had made an impact on their life, their successes and failures, their preferred futures and/or the positive and negative influences people had had in their lives. During the interpretation of the SII and DWYA, participants were asked to view the results as pieces in their developing career story. Other components of the narrative career treatment included narrative prompts used during discussions of the occupational family tree and the lifeline exercise. Also, the final goals paper was written to include ideas from Campbell and Ungar's (2004) phases. Finally, an outsider-witness responses activity was added at the end in place of the goal setting exercises and discussion. This allowed students to tell their occupational story and hear the audience's response to it. The following is a detailed description of this activity, which provided an important component of the narrative process for the narrative group.

The outsider-witness activity included in the narrative group was a summary activity to consolidate what had been gained during the semester-long intervention. It focused on group members telling of their career-related narratives, and having an audience of group members respond. The activity is one process with three distinct

components. This narrative process first includes a structured interview with each of the group members while the rest of the group members serve as the audience to the story. The interview is based on Campbell and Ungar's (2004) seven aspects of life/work design in narrative career counseling. The facilitator doing the interviews then turns his or her attention to the rest of the group and interviews them while the original speaker sits in the audience position. The rest of the group members are interviewed about the impact of the subject's story on their experience. This interview covers the four main topics as outlined in Russell and Carey (2004). The first topic the interview focuses on is identifying the particular expression that impacted the listener. Then, audience members describe an image relating to claims of identity that the particular expression evoked. Third, the audience members are queried about why the expression of the speaker struck a chord with them. It is important to inquire into what parts of the listener's experience the audience related to and why this particular expression resonated with them. The original speaker then is interviewed by the group facilitator with the group present for the impact on him or her of hearing their stories resonate with members of the audience. After everyone in the group has had a chance to tell their story and receive outsider response interviews, the group is interviewed for ways they were moved by the entire interview/response experience. This aspect is called acknowledging transport, and occurs when a listener speaks of how they have been changed by being present during the telling of another's vocational story or how they have been moved by others responding to their telling.

Approximately 75% of the course time was the same for the experimental and control groups. The course assignments, however, differed by approximately 60% of the material. Overall, the tone set at the beginning and the end of the courses should shape the students perspectives differently even though the majority of the content overlapped.

#### *Data Analysis*

The data was collected from both administrations of the CDSE-SF and OES-CR and were analyzed using a repeated measures analysis of variance. *Time* was the within subjects factor, and *Treatment* the between subjects factor. The dependent variables consisted of the scores on the CDSE-SF and the OES-CR. The repeated measures analysis of variance allowed for an investigation of whether any of the groups' CDSE-SF or OES-CR scores changed from the first administration to the second administration. If there are any differences, it allows for an exploration into these by follow-up tests to detect any main effects and interactions between the two treatment groups. This clarifies, a) whether one or both groups increased significantly in career decision self-efficacy and/or occupational engagement; and b) whether one group increased significantly more than the other group on either measure. A covariate control analysis was also performed to detect whether any of the demographic variables significantly influenced the main effects or interactions.

## CHAPTER IV

### Results

This study aims to investigate the impact of narrative additions to a career intervention on university students' engagement in the career process and confidence in making career related decisions. This chapter will detail investigations of any possible covariates and present the results of the hypothesis testing process.

#### *Covariate Analyses*

Prior to statistically comparing the means related to the above hypotheses, analyses were performed to determine if there were covariates that might explain some of the differences between the narrative addition group and the treatment-as-usual group. Sex, race, year in school, and level of decidedness on career choice were all evaluated as potential covariates.

Beginning with sex, an independent-samples t-test was conducted to evaluate whether means differed significantly between males ( $M = 87.01$ ,  $SD = 14.84$ ) and females ( $M = 87.79$ ,  $SD = 16.69$ ) on scores on their CDSE-SF scores. This showed no significant differences,  $t(82) = .218$ ,  $p = .828$ . An independent-samples t-test was also conducted on whether means differed significantly between males and females on the other scale used for this study, the OES-CR. Since Lavenne's Test for Equality of Variances was significant ( $F = 3.98$ ,  $p = .049$ ), equal variances were not assumed and the appropriate t-value was utilized. The test was not significant,  $t(40.70) = .955$ ,  $p = .35$ , and this showed that females ( $M = 101.88$ ,  $SD = 13.73$ ) and males ( $M = 97.72$ ,  $SD = 21.22$ ) did not differ significantly on their OES-CR scores.

An independent-samples t-test was conducted to evaluate if students with various self-identified racial and ethnic backgrounds differed significantly on CDSE-SF scores. Due to low numbers of racial and ethnic minorities, students were divided into two categories of Caucasian and non-Caucasian groups. The test was not significant,  $t(82) = .956$ ,  $p = .342$ , showing that Caucasian students ( $M = 88.18$ ,  $SD = 15.29$ ) and non-Caucasian students ( $M = 85.58$ ,  $SD = 16.19$ ) did not differ significantly on their CDSE-SF scores. An independent-samples t-test was also conducted to determine if groups identifying as Caucasian and groups identifying as non-Caucasian differed on the means of their OES-CR scores. The test was not significant,  $t(82) = 1.77$ ,  $p = .317$ , which illustrated that students who identified as Caucasian ( $M = 101.74$ ,  $SD = 17.23$ ) and students who identified as non-Caucasian ( $M = 92.67$ ,  $SD = 10.41$ ) did not differ significantly on their OES-CR scores.

Decidedness was also a potential covariate that was investigated. An independent-samples t-test was conducted to evaluate whether students who identified as undecided and students who listed a major differed significantly on the CDSE-SF. Students who identified as undecided in terms of their major ( $M = 85.06$ ,  $SD = 13.84$ ) and students who listed a major ( $M = 90.12$ ,  $SD = 16.77$ ) did not differ significantly on the CDSE-SF ( $t(81) = 1.50$ ,  $p = .137$ ). An independent-samples t-test was also conducted to evaluate whether students who identified as undecided and students who listed a major differed significantly on OES-CR scores. Students who identified as undecided ( $M = 98.10$ ,  $SD = 19.15$ ) and students who listed a major ( $M$

= 102.75, SD = 12.96) did not differ significantly on their OES-CR scores ( $t(81) = 1.27, p = .209$ ).

Differences between students in different years in school were also noted as a possible covariate. A one-way analysis of variance was conducted to evaluate the relationship between students' year in school and their score on the CDSE-SF. The independent variable, year in school, included three levels: freshmen, sophomore, and junior years. The dependent variable was the sum of their answers on the CDSE-SF. Scores on the CDSE-SF did not differ significantly between freshmen ( $M = 88.47, SD = 12.55$ ), sophomore ( $M = 87.79, SD = 17.86$ ), or junior years ( $M = 85.08, SD = 15.38$ )  $F(2,80) = .221, p = .802$ . A one-way analysis of variance was also conducted to evaluate the relationship between students' year in school and their score on the OES-CR. Scores on the OES-CR did not differ significantly between freshmen students ( $M = 100.16, SD = 15.64$ ), sophomore students ( $M = 99.66, SD = 18.98$ ), or junior students ( $M = 103.49, SD = 12.08$ )  $F(2,80) = .256, p = .775$ .

As illustrated by the above results, none of the potential covariates (race, sex, year in school, and level of decidedness) were significant. Therefore, these factors were not considered in the hypothesis testing model.

An item-analysis was conducted on both scales used in this study. Both scales had reliable Cronbach's alphas. A coefficient alpha of .93 was demonstrated for the CDSE-SF and a coefficient alpha of .85 was demonstrated for the OES-CR.

### *Hypothesis Testing*

To test this study's first hypothesis that students' engagement in the career exploration process as measured by the OES-CR differed between the treatment-as-usual group and the narrative group, a one-way within-subjects ANOVA was conducted. This measured the difference between pre and post tests accounting for the same subjects taking the same tests at two different times. The factor was Time, with Time<sub>1</sub> taking place at the start of the intervention and Time<sub>2</sub> taking place at the end of the intervention. The dependent variable was scores on the OES-CR. The results for the ANOVA indicated a significant effect for Time, Wilks's  $\Lambda = .84$   $F(1,82) = 19.94, p < .01, \eta^2 = .16$ .

Follow-up polynomial contrasts indicated no significant interaction effects,  $F(1,82) = 2.24, p = .14, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .03$ . On the OES-CR the narrative group did not change from pre-test ( $M = 98.87, SD = 14.29$ ) to posttest ( $M = 108.20, SD = 11.95$ ) significantly more than the treatment-as-usual group pre-test ( $M = 102.18, SD = 14.29$ ) to post-test ( $M = 106.43, SD = 13.56$ ) (see Figure 1).

A one-way within-subjects ANOVA was conducted to test this study's second hypothesis that students in the narrative condition would have significantly more confidence in their ability to make career decisions as measured by the CDSE-SF. The factor was Time, with Time<sub>1</sub> taking place at the start of the intervention and Time<sub>2</sub> taking place at the end of the intervention. The dependent variable was students' scores on the CDSE-SF. The results for the ANOVA indicated a significant effect for Time, Wilks's  $\Lambda = .65$   $F(1,82) = 45.03, p < .01, \eta^2 = .35$ .

Follow-up polynomial contrasts indicated no significant interaction effects,  $F(1,82) = 2.93, p = .09, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .03$ . On the CDSE-SF the narrative group did not change from pre-test ( $M = 88.48, SD = 16.72$ ) to posttest ( $M = 102.77, SD = 13.66$ ) significantly more than the treatment-as-usual group pre-test ( $M = 86.47, SD = 13.95$ ) to post-test ( $M = 94.95, SD = 12.56$ ) (see Figure 2).

The hypothesis testing revealed that neither hypothesis was supported. While students in this study did increase their scores significantly on both measures over time, they did not have significantly higher scores on the CDSE-SF or the OES-CR in the group with the narrative additions compared to the treatment-as-usual group.

Figure 1

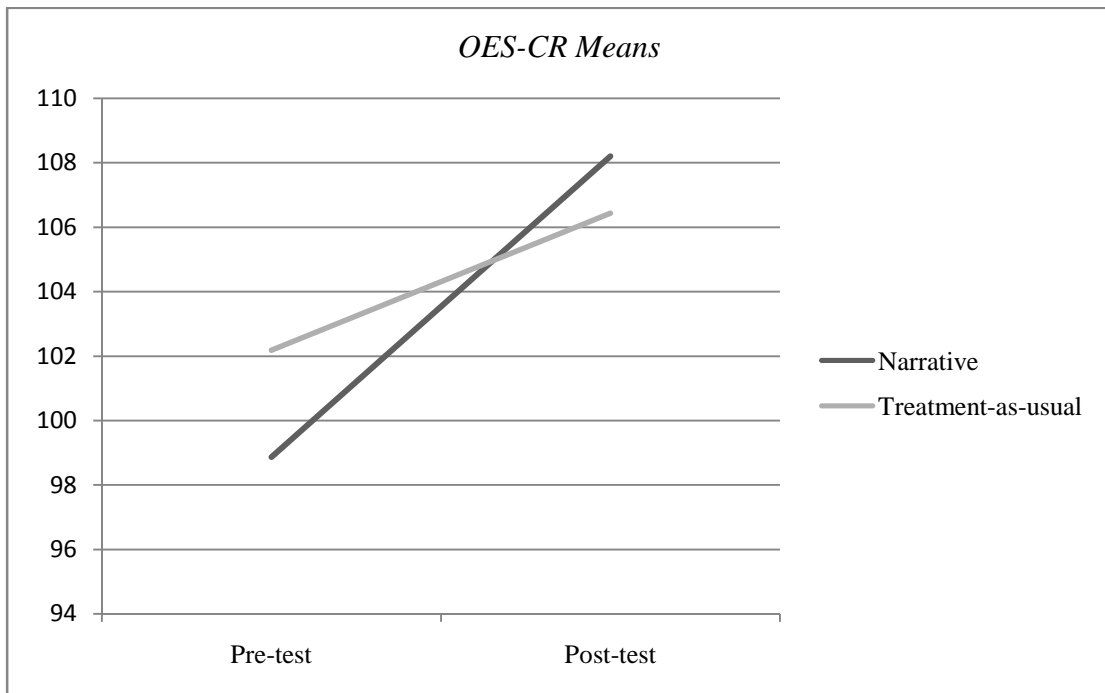
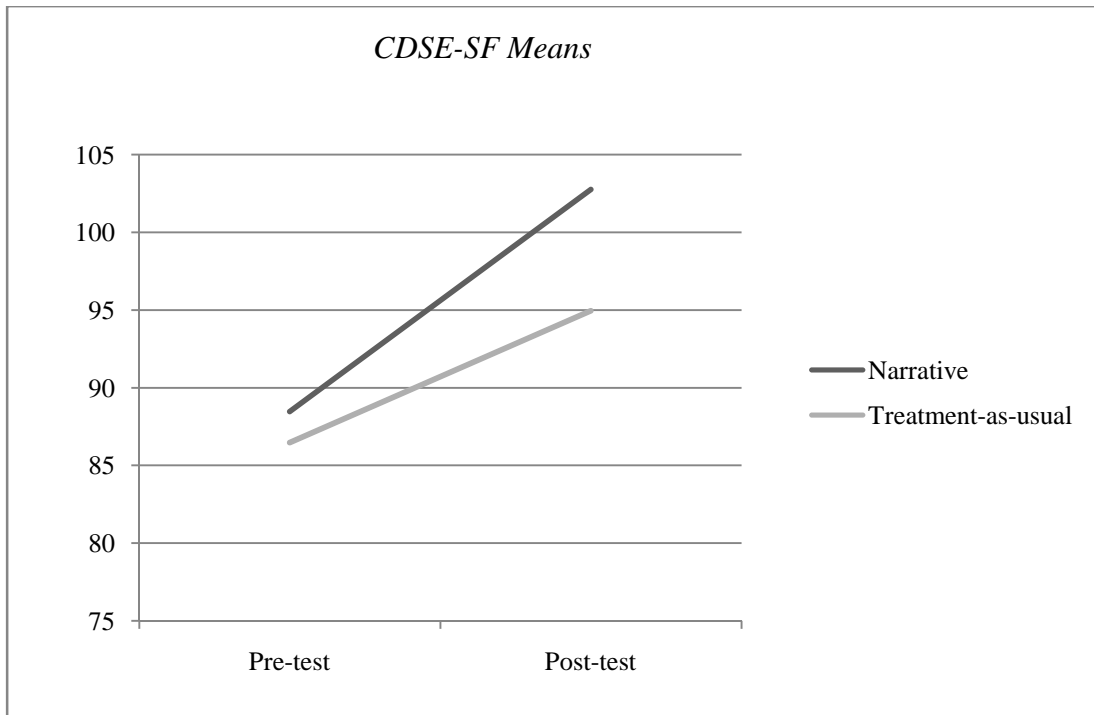




Figure 2



## CHAPTER V

### Discussion

This chapter relates a summary of the statistical findings of the analyses conducted in the results section. It goes on to explain the interpretation of the findings and some of the limitations unique to this study. There will also be a discussion on implications to career counseling and psychology at large, as well as recommendations for future research.

#### *Summary of Findings*

The first hypothesis suggested that adding a narrative component to a career exploration course would increase students' engagement in career exploration significantly more than the course without the narrative additions. This hypothesis was not supported. The second hypothesis stated that the addition of the narrative component would increase students' belief in their ability to make career decisions more than the group that did not include the narrative component. This hypothesis was not supported. However, it was found that both the narrative group and the treatment-as-usual groups increased significantly in engagement in the career exploration process and in their confidence in their ability to make career decisions.

#### *Explanation of Findings and Limitations*

As the traditional approaches to career counseling are becoming more limited in their ability to address the changing world of work and non-linear trajectory of workers, new approaches are being developed and utilized to address this gap. New approaches have ranged from incorporating life roles (Savickas, 2005) to theories

such as planned happenstance (Mitchell, Levin, & Krumboltz, 1998). The narrative perspective adds to this new body of knowledge that addresses the gap between traditional approaches and the modern worker/career explorer. While the narrative perspective directly addresses the need to elicit clients' subjective experience in career counseling, the intention of this study was to use objective measures to identify which constructs the narrative approach might impact. The semester-long course chosen for this study was directed at helping first and second year students explore careers and majors. It incorporated traditional exploration components like personality and interest assessments, informational interviews, researching majors, and reflection papers. The narrative additions to the course, which included writing a personal narrative in the 3<sup>rd</sup> person, an outsider-witness exercise, and a re-remembering exercise, were intended to increase the class's engagement in the students' subjective career narrative experience. Two constructs were chosen to evaluate the effects of the narrative additions compared with a treatment-as-usual group. The first construct was career decision self-efficacy, a standard in career counseling literature (Swanson & Gore, 2000). Occupational engagement was the second construct chosen for evaluation because it has been theorized this construct is important in the face of the changing world of work career searchers face (Krieshok, Black, & McKay, 2008).

In both cases, the study failed to identify the narrative interventions' impact on career decision self-efficacy or occupational engagement. This does not imply that the narrative additions were less effective than the class as taught in previous years. In fact, both groups improved significantly on both of the measures. This

suggests that narrative additions may have the same capacity to enact change in career self-efficacy and occupational engagement although is only able to show that the narrative additions did not detract from the intervention in terms of the two measures. Narrative additions or a full narrative approach could be a viable alternative to other career interventions. This supports previous research that career interventions are generally effective (Oliver & Spokane, 1988) and that interventions influenced by a narrative perspective could be included in those effective interventions.

There are many possible reasons as to why this study did not show a significant effect for the group with narrative additions above that of the treatment-as-usual group. One reason is that the interventions may not have been distinct enough from each other. The amount of material shared by the classes exceeded that which was different. The narrative framework added to the experimental group may not have provided enough unique perspective that was relevant to the concepts being measured. For example both groups addressed most of the critical components in a successful career intervention (Ryan, 1999). Both groups utilized written exercises that challenged participants to reflect on their career development and goals, provided individualized interpretations and feedback, related information on the world of work, and challenged participants to engage in modeling experiences through informational interviews. According to Ryan, successful programs included at least three of the components and both of the groups measured in this study attempted to incorporate

four of the five components. In terms of the outcome variables measured, this might have made both groups look similarly effective.

Another possible reason this study did not show significant differences between the narrative group and the treatment-as-usual group were the measures chosen to evaluate this difference. The measures both relied on self report and thus, were limited by not including any direct observation or observational reports. The CDSE, while standard in evaluating career interventions, may not be the most appropriate in measuring the contribution of the narrative perspective. The measure intends to detect students confidence in their ability to make a career decision, but not the richness of the exploration a student may have done or even their confidence in being adaptable to different career situations.

The OES-CR was hypothesized to also be sensitive to the contributions of the narrative approach. While the narrative approach may offer unique contributions to occupational engagement, these differences were not detected in this study. The OES-CR was intended to detect an increase in students' exploration and engagement in the career exploration process. The version of the OES that was used in this study was an intermediary version that has since been updated and improved. This may have limited its ability to detect true effects of the narrative additions on occupational engagement. Subsequent versions such as the OES-C (Black, 2006) utilized a Global Engagement scale that includes four subscales: Networking, Attunement, Flexibility, and Enrichment. The updated version of the OES and subscales could have added a better capacity to detect differences in engagement in addition to changes in specific

subscales. Also, while engagement and adaptability have been theorized as important directions in career counseling (Krieshok, Black, & McKay, 2008), evaluating engagement by utilizing an objective measure might overlook the rich career development that may have been stimulated internally in these students in the narrative group.

While this study was implemented in a university environment, some caution should be used when applying it to other university settings or the population at large. First, the sample was relatively small (n=84) and not diverse in terms of ethnicity (85.7% identified as Caucasian), age range (18-26), or class standing (83.1% were 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> year students). Given this lack of diversity, this sample may not represent the population at large or other university settings, especially in more diverse areas of the United States, let alone universities in other countries. Also, this was targeted at first and second year students who may have different career concerns from average third year, fourth year, and graduate students.

This course was not required for all students, which may have biased the sample characteristics. The sample represented those who chose to be in a course designed to help them wrestle with career and major exploration, thus limiting the range of career decidedness and where they are in their decision making process. Other students may have selected the class from the perception that it would help their Grade Point Average (GPA). For example, athletes were often advised to take the course because of the athletic advisors' belief that athletes may not have adequately prepared for a secondary career choice to their athletic path or that they

would receive a grade that would raise their GPA. Either way, this led to an over representation of student athletes in the class compared to the average course on campus. Therefore, since the course was not randomly assigned, the reasons the students selected the course may have biased the results. For practical purposes, the assignment of condition was based on course instructor. It is possible that random assignment of students would have improved the rigor of the study and thus affected the outcome.

### *Implications and Future Directions*

More work is needed in order to further understand the possible applications of the narrative approach to career directions. The first step may be to replicate this study after addressing the limitations discussed above. Improvements such as a larger and more diverse sample, a different population (e.g. adolescents, advanced-level college students, more diverse campus, etc.), more experimental controls, and enhancing the narrative intervention to make it more distinct may add to the richness of data on this particular application of narrative theory. Another methodological change in future research on narrative contributions would be to compare it to a no-treatment group. Comparing with an average first or second year college student not in the course or receiving individual career counseling would have accomplished this task. Comparing to a no-treatment group is often part of the process of investigating an intervention's effectiveness. This would have helped determine if there were any preexisting factors that might have explained some of the differences in the groups

and increased generalizability to university students at large. The decision to not include these aspects included feasibility and time limitations.

A further step would be to gather more longitudinal data. Holland (1997) and Brown & Crane (2000) agree that career literature has been lacking in terms of long-term work and life satisfaction, which is usually what clients are seeking when they come in for career counseling. This study fits within the general trend that looks at short term gains. Brown & Crane go on to suggest that policy makers and clients might not be as impressed with increases in career maturity and career decision self-efficacy as much as making a difference in their future work lives. This may become even more important as the workforce is continually coping with unpredictable work and adapting to new environments. This is especially true in light of the recent economic crisis which includes the worst episode of job loss in 34 years (Isidore, 2009). Many are forced to look for new jobs and possibly transition to new fields. More one, five, and ten year follow-ups on career interventions such as the narrative approach would begin to propel the field forward in our knowledge of how our efforts to intervene in the lives of college students impact their future sense of wellbeing and success in the job search and adaptation process.

Another direction that is particularly relevant to this study is further investigation into the contribution of the narrative perspective in career counseling. This could include studies that are more purely narrative and have less resemblance to career counseling-as-usual. They may also include various narrative interventions that have been devised by different theorists and researchers. These include Brott's



(2001) storied approach, Campbell and Ungar's (2004) seven phases, Cochran's (1997) approach, Savickas's (1995) life-theme counseling model and further integration of concepts and interventions from the narrative application in the mental health field. These interventions could stand on their own or be combined with more objective approaches. It could also include different more objective measures that are more able to detect changes in occupational engagement, self-efficacy, career identity, or other relevant concepts to the career explorer. Some areas that are especially critical to modern workers are adaptability and flexibility (Savickas 2000), which might be helpful to develop measures that specifically address these concepts in relation to students' career development.

As more research is done in this area, more qualitative in addition to quantitative studies must be done to further understand the richness that narrative offers. It may be that using predominantly quantitative studies overlooks the depth, individuality, intuition, and meaning that narrating career stories and using more constructivist approaches add to peoples' lives. According to Black (2006), constructivist theorists encourage career explorers to bring a sense of personal agency into their career direction instead of simply letting their occupations determine who they are. Qualitative studies might detect subtle differences in students' sense of personal agency in relation to their vocational journey. These studies could include interviews with participants following an intervention, using focus groups, and analyzing participants' written narratives and responses. Direct observation and

secondary raters might also provide additional information not detected by objective measures.

One particular area of qualitative assessments that could add to the research in this area is the constructivist approach to career assessment. Both Schultheiss (2005) and Whiston and Rhardja (2005) argue for more use of the constructivist approach to career assessments. They describe constructivist qualitative career assessments as being more focused on holistic and contextual views of work and individuals. This includes understandings of influences of culture, family, and individual narratives. The process is more collaborative and cooperative. Schultheiss details several specific approaches such as those based on action theory, structured and semi-structured interviews, and narrative approaches. Specific interviews include: the Career-In-Culture Interview (Ponterotto, Rivera, & Sueyoshi, 2000), Life Career Assessment (Gysbers & Moore, 1987), and Relationships and Career Interview (Schultheiss, 2003). Whiston and Rhardja describe qualitative assessments, caveats in their use, and end with a suggestion to combine qualitative and quantitative approaches. Qualitative approaches could add meaning to more objective methods while quantitative measures could be translated meaningfully into client's life story. In general, constructivist qualitative assessments seem to naturally harmonize with constructivist and narrative interventions and can be interventions of their own accord.

### *Conclusion*

This study intended to add to the body of knowledge of new approaches addressing the recent changes in the nature of work. This is especially important because vocational psychology has been relatively stagnant and has had a limited response or shift in how to deal with career explorers (Savickas & Baker, 2005). There has been a call for more approaches and interventions that deal with meaning and subjective experiences of clients seeking career assistance. Narrative is one such perspective that has potential to address these shortcomings. While this study did not find significant differences between the narrative approach and a treatment-as-usual group in career decision self-efficacy or occupational engagement, it did support the notion that the narrative perspective at least does not detract from an effective career intervention. More research should be done to further investigate potential contributions of the narrative approach and other approaches that address the changing nature of work.

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## Appendix A

### Demographic Questionnaire

*Please provide the following demographic information.*

Age: \_\_\_\_\_ Sex:  Female  Male High School G.P.A. (on a 4 point scale) \_\_\_\_\_  
 College G.P.A. \_\_\_\_\_

Are you a first generation college student?  Yes  No

What is your official college major? \_\_\_\_\_ -or-  Undecided

**If you listed a major, please answer this question:**  
 How **DECIDED** would you say you are?

- Officially Decided, but that could easily be Undecided.
- Officially Decided, but it would not surprise me if I changed majors before I graduate.
- Pretty Decided. I am fairly sure this is the major I want to graduate in.
- Totally Decided. I can't imagine changing majors.

**If you checked UNDECIDED, please answer this question:**  
 How **UNDECIDED** would you say you are?

- Officially Undecided, but I am pretty sure about what I am going to major in.
- Still Undecided, but I have narrowed it down to just a few things.
- Pretty Undecided, but I'm not freaked out about it.
- Totally Undecided. At this point I don't have a clue as to what I should major in.

**Year in school:**  
 Freshman  Sophomore  Junior  Senior  Graduate Student

Do you expect to graduate on time?  Yes  No

ACT Score: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Number of credit hours completed (not including current courses): \_\_\_\_\_

Parents' Education Levels			
Mother			Father
<input type="checkbox"/> Elementary School	<input type="checkbox"/> Bachelors Degree	<input type="checkbox"/> Elementary School	<input type="checkbox"/> Bachelors Degree
<input type="checkbox"/> Some High School	<input type="checkbox"/> Masters Degree	<input type="checkbox"/> Some High School	<input type="checkbox"/> Masters Degree
<input type="checkbox"/> High School Grad or GED	<input type="checkbox"/> Doctoral Degree	<input type="checkbox"/> High School Grad or GED	<input type="checkbox"/> Doctoral Degree
<input type="checkbox"/> Some College	<input type="checkbox"/> Other	<input type="checkbox"/> Some College	<input type="checkbox"/> Other
<input type="checkbox"/> Associates Degree		<input type="checkbox"/> Associates Degree	

**How do you identify? Check all that apply.**

<input type="checkbox"/> American Indian or other Native American	<input type="checkbox"/> Mexican or Mexican American
<input type="checkbox"/> Asian, Asian American, or Pacific Islander	<input type="checkbox"/> Puerto Rican
<input type="checkbox"/> Black or African American	<input type="checkbox"/> Other Hispanic or Latino
<input type="checkbox"/> White (non-Hispanic)	<input type="checkbox"/> Multiracial
<input type="checkbox"/> Other	<input type="checkbox"/> I prefer not to respond

Are you an international student?  Yes  No

**THANK YOU FOR PARTICIPATION!**

## Appendix B

### Semester Narrative Intervention Overview (Narrative components italicized)

#### Week 1

- Take OES/CDMSE/REI
- Ice breaker/introductions
- *Introduce narrative perspective/course*

#### Week 2

- Remind class of narrative overview
- *Short narrative-write short paragraph in 3<sup>rd</sup> person about yourself including*
  - *Moments that made an impact on your life direction*
  - *Flexible goals/preferred futures that reflect positive uncertainty*
  - *Successes and failures and what you would have done differently*
- *Share stories*
- Occupational family tree
  - *Club of life metaphor-who's influence to upgrade or downgrade*
  - *re-membling questions-pick one or two influential figures to talk about*

#### Week 3

- Lifeline activity
  - *For discussion ask people to share their lifeline and the audience to respond with first two categories of audience responses*
- Values exercise

#### Week 4

- Card sort
- Discuss researching a major assignment
- Strong Interest Inventory Activity
  - Create a company

#### Week 5

- Do What You Are activity

#### Week 6

- UCC visit/scavenger hunt or
- Research majors assignment

#### Week 7

- Research Majors assignment or
- UCC visit/scavenger hunt

#### Week 8

- Focus paper due-*incorporate narrative ideas into paper-developing narrative*
- Informational interview-brainstorm as a group

- *How could this interview add to your storyline, explore alternative storylines*

Week 9

- Individual meetings with group leader
  - *How is the development of your new story/(s) going?*

Week 10

- Individual meetings with group leader

Week 11

- Catch up day

Week 12

- Peer review of resumes

Week 13

- Practice interview skills

Week 14

- *Outsider-witness activities*
- *Action plan due*
  - *write about your developing storyline in 3<sup>rd</sup> person*
  - *include needs, values/life purposes, interests, and passions*
  - *internal and external resources*
  - *internal and external voices to turn up or turn down*
  - *constraints*
  - *next steps*
  - *alternative storylines/develop exploratory attitude*

Week 15

- *Outsider-witness activities-2<sup>nd</sup> half of group*



## Appendix C

### Semester Intervention Treatment-as-Usual Overview

#### Week 1

- Take OES/CDMSE/REI
- Ice breaker/introductions
- Identify personal goals for the course

#### Week 2

- Three lists
  - Occupations
  - Important factors for making a career decision
  - Essential activities for KU/college students
- Occupational family tree

#### Week 3

- Lifeline activity
- Values exercise

#### Week 4

- Card sort
- Discuss researching a major assignment
- Strong Interest Inventory Activity
  - Create a company

#### Week 5

- Do What You Are activity

#### Week 6

- UCC visit/scavenger hunt or
- Research majors assignment

#### Week 7

- Research Majors assignment or
- UCC visit/scavenger hunt

#### Week 8

- Focus paper due
- Informational interview-brainstorm as a group

#### Week 9

- Individual meetings with group leader

#### Week 10

- Individual meetings with group leader

#### Week 11

- Catch up day

#### Week 12

- Peer review of resumes

Week 13

- Practice interview skills

Week 14

- To be determined

Week 15

- Action plan due-discuss action plan

## Appendix D

### Outsider-Witness Activity

#### Introduction

- Listen carefully to see what parts of their story resonates with you
  - Define resonance
- This is not an exercise in giving advice
- Write down phrases that particularly stand out and connect with you
- Imagine that you are writing your story and there are many possible futures, but as the author of your own story you are building a particular future that fits more with the direction that you want to head, your preferred future

#### Interview Questions

- As you have develop your career story before and through this class, what have you learned about:
  - What you are *interested* in
  - The *passions* that lead to these interests
  - The *values and needs* that are behind those interests
  - And the *life purposes* that guide you
- What experience/moments have you had that helped you move into your preferred future?
- What goals do you have regarding your majors and careers?
- What resources do you have that will help you move toward your goals?

- What inner strengths are you able to use?
- What outer resources provide support for you in pursuing your goals in your environment or the people around you?
- What stories or barriers are holding you back or which voices do you want to tune out?
- What are some specific steps you can take to move toward this future you are creating?
  - What are the first steps to take during the next year?
- How will you continue to explore *alternative* opportunities/options?

## Outsider-Witness Audience Questions

(No need to ask all the questions, just try to cover each of the categories)

### Identifying the Expression

What did you hear that stood out to you?

What specific phrases or comments caught your attention?

### Describing the Image

How did that phrase or comment shape your thoughts about what might be important to them?

What in their story did you hear that relates to their purposes, values, beliefs, hopes, dreams, and/or commitments?

### Embodying Responses

How come this stood out for you?

Why do you think it is that you have been drawn to this particular aspect of what you heard?

What is it in your own life that accounts for why you were touched or moved by what you heard?

Could you say something about what this connects with in terms of your own experience of life?

### Return to original speaker

What particular phrases and comments stood out?

How were you moved/helped by their comments?

How come these comments stood out for you?

Did it remind you of any previous thoughts/conversations you've had?

-----

(After entire group has had a chance, have a brief discussion with the entire group covering the whole interview/reflection process)

Acknowledging Transport

Did any different perspectives arise after hearing these conversations?

How have you been moved by these conversations?

Did it have you reflecting on other conversations you've had?

## Re-Membering Conversations

Think of one or two significant figures in your life (from your family tree or other important, supportive figure) that wouldn't be surprised that you are heading in the directions and forming the identity that you're forming

1<sup>st</sup> set of inquiries

- Significant figures contribution to person's life
- Rich description of the ways in which this connection shaped/had the potential to shape the person's sense of who they are what their life is about

2<sup>nd</sup> set

- What person has contributed to life of the figure
- Ways this contribution shaped the figures sense of who they were or what their life was about

## Appendix E

### Consent Form

The Impact of a Career Group Intervention on Career Related Outcomes

#### INTRODUCTION

The Department of Psychology and Research in Education at the University of Kansas supports the practice of protection for human subjects participating in research. The following information is provided for you to decide whether you wish to participate in the present study. You may refuse to sign this form and not participate in this study. You should be aware that even if you agree to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time. If you do withdraw from this study, it will not affect your relationship with this unit, the services it may provide to you, or the University of Kansas.

#### PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

*The purpose of this study is to investigate whether two types of career exploration groups will increase participants' engagement in the career exploration process and self efficacy in career decision making.*

#### PROCEDURES

*You will be asked to participate in one of two types of groups that explore ideas you have for careers and major as part of your PRE 101 course. You will take assessments to explore values, interests, and personality and relate the results to you career exploration. You will also be asked to participate in group discussions that will include your past career related decisions and your goals for the future. In the beginning and end of this group you will be asked to complete two surveys, one on self efficacy in career decision and the other on engagement in occupational exploration process. The time commitment for the career exploration part of your course will be approximately 6 hours.*

#### RISKS

*There are no likely risks associated with this study.*

#### BENEFITS

*You should gain a better understanding of yourself and have an opportunity to explore ideas you have for your major and future career.*



## PAYMENT TO PARTICIPANTS

*You will not be paid for your participation.*

## PARTICIPANT CONFIDENTIALITY

To perform this study, researchers will collect information about you through two surveys. Your name will not be associated in any way with the information collected about you or with the research findings from this study. The researcher(s) will use a study number, initials, or a pseudonym instead of your name.

The researchers will not share information about you with anyone not specified above unless required by law or unless you give written permission.

Permission granted on this date to use and disclose your information remains in effect indefinitely. By signing this form you give permission for the use and disclosure of your information for purposes of this study at any time in the future.

## REFUSAL TO SIGN CONSENT AND AUTHORIZATION

You are not required to sign this Consent and Authorization form and you may refuse to do so without affecting your right to any services you are receiving or may receive from the University of Kansas or to participate in any programs or events of the University of Kansas. However, if you refuse to sign, you cannot participate in this study.

## CANCELLING THIS CONSENT AND AUTHORIZATION

You may withdraw your consent to participate in this study at any time. You also have the right to cancel your permission to use and disclose information collected about you, in writing, at any time, by sending your written request to: Craig Beeson, 1215 Tennessee #3, Lawrence KS 66044. If you cancel permission to use your information, the researchers will stop collecting additional information about you. However, the research team may use and disclose information that was gathered before they received your cancellation, as described above.

## QUESTIONS ABOUT PARTICIPATION

Questions about procedures should be directed to the researcher(s) listed at the end of this consent form.

PARTICIPANT CERTIFICATION:

I have read this Consent and Authorization form. I have had the opportunity to ask, and I have received answers to, any questions I had regarding the study. I understand that if I have any additional questions about my rights as a research participant, I may call (785) 864-7429 or (785) 864-7385 or write the Human Subjects Committee Lawrence Campus (HSCL), University of Kansas, 2385 Irving Hill Road, Lawrence, Kansas 66045-7563, email [dhann@ku.edu](mailto:dhann@ku.edu) or [mdenning@ku.edu](mailto:mdenning@ku.edu).

I agree to take part in this study as a research participant. By my signature I affirm that I am at least 18 years old and that I have received a copy of this Consent and Authorization form.

_____	_____
Type/Print Participant's Name	Date
_____	
Participant's Signature	

Research Contact Information:

Craig Beeson, Principal Investigator, 1215 Tennessee #3, Lawrence, KS 66044.

Thomas Krieshok PhD, Faculty Supervisor, 1122 W. Campus Rd. JRP, Room 618  
University of Kansas, Lawrence, KS 66045-3101, (785) 864-9654