

WHAT'S MY STORY?
NARRATIVE INTERVENTION IN CAREER COUNSELING

By

LISA ELLEN SEVERY

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by

Lisa Ellen Severy

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My advice to you it not to inquire why or whither,
but just to enjoy the ice cream on your plate. -Thornton Wilder

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By

Lisa Ellen Severy

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As the world of work and the employment change rapidly so must the practice of career counseling. This project explored the utility of combining traditional and postmodern career counseling techniques in an online, self-help format. A website was created containing eight activities for identifying narrative themes, exploring interests, clarifying values, understanding relationships, and career planning. The primary question addressed by the research focused on whether participants completing the online project would experience improvement in their career certainty and indecision as measured by the Career Decision Scale (CDS).

Volunteers from two public universities were invited to participate. Over the course of the project, 719 volunteers were randomly assigned to one of four groups, two control groups and two intervention groups. Retention was a challenge for the project

and waiting for at least twenty participants in each group to complete the intervention made the project timeline much longer than originally anticipated.

Results indicate both an intervention effect and an interaction effect. Those participants who received the intervention exhibited significantly improved scores on the Career Decision Scale (CDS). In addition, those who took the CDS as a pretest improved more than those who only participated in the posttest. Cluster analyses of the CDS indicated two distinct scoring groups, one with better scorers than the other. Participants receiving the intervention were four times more likely to fall in this better group at the conclusion of the study.

These research findings indicate that combining traditional and postmodern concepts in an online, self-help tool is helpful in improving career development. At the same time, the overwhelming number of volunteers implies a strong demand for this type of intervention. Further research is needed to determine if the high number of people who created accounts but did not complete the project could be improved by combining the online system with individual or group counseling.

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

As the world of work and the concept of “career” continually change, the practice of career counseling has adapted to meet the needs of clients seeking services.

Postmodern theories of career development that incorporate a holistic approach are helping to gradually close the gap between contemporary career counseling practice and traditional theories (Amundson, 1997; Savickas & Walsh, 1996; Severy, 2002). As recent research and theorizing have enhanced the understanding of postmodern career counseling, counselors are working to develop new interventions that would help to facilitate career development using this new model (Savickas, 2001; Severy, 2002; Young & Valach, 2000).

Statement of the Problem

Although career counselors are incorporating more narrative models into their daily practice with clients, interventions and vocational assessments built upon this model have been slow to emerge. At the same time, little research has been conducted to examine the impact of narrative and personal mythology methodology. While much has been written about the postmodern theories underlying the practice, very few quantitative research projects have examined their actual utility in practice.

Purpose of the Study

This project involved the development, use, and evaluation of a new intervention in career counseling. The intervention was an online tool designed for use by individual clients. Activities on the website focused on building a career narrative and encouraging

clients to author their own stories. As proposed by numerous postmodern career counseling theorists, this intervention included the integration of traditional intervention with postmodern influences (Brott, 2001; Savickas, 2000b; Severy, 2002). The purpose of the study was to explore whether or not a web-based intervention grounded in a narrative model of career development would be successful in helping to reduce participants' career indecision and increase their career certainty.

Analogous to the writing of any great masterpiece, the creation of a career narrative involves a good deal of research and the exploration of many personal and professional facets. The project website incorporated and built upon this premise by providing various exercises, each addressing a critical piece of career development work. Each activity started with a quotation designed to introduce the topic and encourage creative thinking in that particular area. The first two sections introduced the concepts of narrative career development and the authoring of one's life story. The first three activities focused on life themes, a central feature in the narrative career counseling model. *Activity One* explored early childhood memories. *Activity Two* addressed life history and personal plot development. *Activity Three* focused on the exploration of inspiration through role models. *Activity Four* asked the participant to consider his or her work values to determine how values will fit into the career story. *Activity Five* incorporated a more traditional career development model by exploring career interests. This interest exercise was framed as choosing a particular genre in which the career narrative would take place. *Activity Six* encouraged the participant to consider the system of people that have or can influence his or her career narrative. *Activity Seven* was another adaptation of more traditional models and focused on personality type. The last

two activities served to integrate the website and led the participant toward the authorship of a complete, cohesive narrative.

Volunteer participants were recruited at two universities in different areas of the United States to participate in this research initiative. Participants were randomly assigned by the online system into one of four groups, two experimental groups and two control groups. In order to assess the utility of the intervention, the Career Decision Scale (CDS) was administered in a pretest/posttest design to assess change in career certainty and career indecision (Osipow, 1987 & 1999; Peng, 2001; Riddle & Hiebert, 1995; Savickas, 2000a).

History of Career Development

Frank Parsons, the father of career development theory, articulated the first integrative model of vocational guidance culminating in the Trait and Factor theory (Collin & Young, 2000; Hansen, 2000; Peavy, 1996; Savickas, 1993; 2000b; Zunker, 2002). Parsons' theory and practice developed along with the demand for vocational services. As the American economy was mostly agrarian before that time, career development services and career counseling were largely unnecessary (Collin & Young, 2000; Peavy, 1996; Savickas, 1993; 2000b; Zunker, 2002). Most people lived and worked within large, multigenerational families on farms and ranches. The often-discussed split between a person's work life and personal life had no meaning. Although some did enter professions such as medicine, law, clergy, or teaching, most people generally viewed these pursuits as "callings" rather than career decisions (Savickas, 1993; 2000b; Zunker, 2002). Whether young adults became a more integral part of the family farm or apprenticed in a trade, the turning to outside advisors for guidance was rare (Collin & Young, 2000; Peavy, 1996; Savickas, 1993; 2000b; Zunker, 2002).

American culture, as well as the world of work, changed dramatically with the coming of the industrial revolution. The agrarian economy quickly gave way to the industrial economy, subsequently changing entire family structures (Savickas & Walsh, 1996; Zunker, 2002). Small nuclear families began moving from rural areas to urban areas in order to be closer to the workplace. As most work was then conducted outside of the homestead, the split between the world of work and home life developed at this time (Savickas & Walsh, 1996; Zunker, 2002). In addition to changing the nature of family organizations, the industrial revolution also brought new concepts including hierarchal bureaucracies and the advent of the “corporate ladder” with high values placed on individualism, competition and advancement (Herr, 2001b). This period marked the emergence of the concept of “career,” defined by a series of jobs within a particular industry. As individuals began to make decisions about how to participate within industries, people began placing emphasis on the importance of career decision-making and vocational guidance as a field began to come into being (Savickas & Walsh, 1996; Zunker, 2002).

At the same time, the dominant theoretical paradigm shifted from a romantic worldview toward a more positivist perspective (Savickas & Walsh, 1996). The search for scientific truth began to take precedence over notions of fate and calling. As an emerging field, vocational guidance researchers adopted the scientific model and set out in search of objective and testable traits, skills, and interests that were measurable (Herr, 2001a). Theories like the Trait and Factor model grew out of this scientific goal (Savickas & Walsh, 1996; Zunker, 2002).

The “person to position” matching paradigm suited the needs of the industrial workforce quite well (Herr, 2001a). Assessment and matching fit the stable and

predictable career paths created by the industrial revolution (Savickas & Walsh, 1996). Vocational guidance practitioners understood typical career paths and recommended those paths to clients whose skills and interests matched those paths (Savickas & Walsh, 1996; Severy, 2002). As this model relied less on interaction and more on scientific assessment, vocational guidance practitioners were able to match large groups of people in short periods of time, a highly desirable feature when large numbers of workers would enter or re-enter the job market, such as after wars or during population and education booms (Herr, 2001b; Savickas, 2000b; Severy, 2002).

This century has brought yet another new paradigm shift in the world of work and the concept of career. The stable and predictable career path provided by the industrial economy does not exist as often in the rising information-based economy (Peavy, 1996; Savickas, 1993). The promise of life-long employment within one organization no longer exists as workers often advance within their own career by moving to a different company or organization (Imel, 2001). Mark Savickas (200b) describes this phenomenon as self-employed workers, moving from one client-company or customer to another. This ever-changing career path has necessarily changed the way that career counselors assist clients in career decision-making (Severy, 2002). The scientific matching models of the last century become less valuable when both the person and place change constantly (Hoskins, 1995).

In addition to the change in the nature of work, the demands of an information economy have also changed the relationship between the world of work and personal life (Savickas, 1989b). The artificial split between the work-self and private-self brought about by the industrial revolution has become arbitrary in the melding of work and home (Manuele-Adkins, 1992; Savickas, 1991). As noted by Hansen, "New work patterns are

emerging, with greater recognition being given to the significant connection between families and work. People increasingly are seeing an interactive connection of work with other important aspects of their lives” (2000).

As the predictable, scientific model of career development becomes distant from the current reality of the world of work, the nature of career counseling has grown and adapted to better serve the needs of clients (Savickas, 1995; Severy, 2002). The positivist search for truth is being replaced by a more postmodern search for meaning and constructed reality (Savickas, 1994 & 2000d; Severy, 2002). This change is especially important within the multicultural nature of this informational economy (Semmler & Williams, 2000). As professions become more diverse, decision-making assessments based on norm groups make less sense. In fact, the scientific and objective approach to career development often missed the needs of people on the edge of the normal curve (Severy, 2002). For example, objective, norm-referenced tests often failed to assist those outside of the norm group represented (Cochran, 1997). A personally constructed career-reality nurtures a subjective self-concept in which clients from diverse backgrounds can author their own stories rather than adapt to the stories established by the norm group (Neimeyer, 1992; Semmler & Williams, 2000; Severy, 2002).

Postmodern Career Counseling

While positivist career counselors attempted to fit people into one reality of the workplace, postmodern practitioners assume that no one reality exists (Wonacott, 2001). The goal, therefore, changes from matching clients to specific career to assisting clients in shaping their own paths. This challenge is a central tenet to the research initiative developed in this paper. In addition, the theory emphasizes that reality is relative and emerges through dialogue and common understanding (Peavy, 1995). Individuals are

seen as constructed selves, created through action and interpretation, continually evolving and changing (Hermans, 1992; Young, 1995). Rather than a set of traits or factors to be measured, individuals are the continually changing result of on-going narrative interpretation (Gothard, 1999; Savickas, 2000b).

As counselors begin to conceptualize career development within this new theory, the nature of career intervention necessarily changes (Severy, 2002). Instead of a clinical process of assessment and matching, the process of career counseling changes to a collaborative process of creating meaning (Cochran, 1997; Savickas, 1993; Young & Valach, 1992).

Narrative or storied career counseling has emerged from this theoretical basis and is gaining popularity (Collin & Young, 2000; Mignot, 2000). As described by Pamela Brott (2001), “the storied approach explores the client’s world through story development as the client and counselor collaboratively co-construct, deconstruct, and construct life stories.” As language plays an especially important part in any narrative process, the language of career counseling has also begun to shift. For this reason, the current project uses the phrase “career developing,” rather than “career development.” Although a subtle difference, the active verb tense encourages clients to take an active, evolving, present role in the creation of a career narrative. Use of the word “development,” on the other hand, has a more permanent, stuck fixed connotation and assumes that it is something that happens at one point in time and then is finished. “Developing” is an ongoing process. “Development” is a finished state of being. As an example of this trend, major universities across the country are changing the way they designate students who have yet to choose a major. At the University of Florida, labels such as “undecided” or “undeclared” have been changed to “exploring.” Administrators agreed that the word

“exploring” elicits a more proactive, less hopeless and moribund condition for students than the other designations. At the University of Colorado at Boulder, the phrase “open option” has replaced “undecided” as a less punitive description of students who have yet to solidify choice of academic major.

This process of authoring life stories embraces all elements of self, including work and life outside of work, as well as multiple life roles such as family member, worker, student, community member, etc. (Gelardin, 2001b; Severy, 2002). As noted, while the line between these roles continues to blur, the importance of involving all of these aspects into the life narrative is especially important (Brott, 2001; Gelardin, 2001a).

This approach is gaining popularity with career counselors for various reasons. First, the model has been seen as non-threatening to more traditional career counseling practices (Savickas, 1989a). For example, many proponents of this model do not suggest the complete elimination of traditional standardized assessments. Instead, they suggest that the results of these assessments be integrated into a holistic, personal, and empowering process of helping clients author their own life-stories (Savickas, 1992; Severy, 2002). In fact, the use of vocational assessments can be helpful in that the language of career developing may not yet be part of the client’s experience and assessments, and therefore, might provide a foundation for furthering the narrative (Savickas, 1997a). With the counselor’s career language and the client’s personal language, a new story can be constructed (Savickas, 1995).

A second factor leading to the gradual acceptance of this model is its utility in addressing the needs of a diverse client base. Proponents of narrative career counseling believe that this new model will help to address multicultural concerns difficult to address in a more standardized model (Savickas, 1997b; Semmler & Williams, 2000). As

the career counseling process focuses on emerging stories, clients will select aspects of themselves that must be included in their narratives. Without a predetermined set of standards to compare each client to, the client establishes his or her own standards that celebrate and honor the themes he or she wants to explore within career (Brott, 2001; Savickas, 2000b; Semmler & Williams, 2000).

Finally, the nature of narrative career development appeals to the hopeful, creative, and metaphoric side of many career counselors (Amundson, 1997; Emmett & Harkins, 1997; Savickas, 1990). Viewing the career developing process as a journey of self-authorship, counselors engage in narratives with clients designed to empower and explore the shaping of personal realities (Frick, 1983; Savickas, 2000c).

Postmodern Career Counseling Intervention

Perhaps more than any other single counseling specialization, career and vocational guidance counselors have embraced self-directed interventions as a valid addition to the counseling process (Clardy, 2000; Harr, 1992). Offering both independence and cost-effectiveness, self-directed activities have become a common tool in career development centers (Alaska Career Exploration Workbook, 1995; Holland, 1987; O'Brien, 1997). The popularity of career self-help books, such as *What Color is Your Parachute?* by Richard Bolles (2004), indicates a strong desire for clients in career transition to help themselves through the process. The purpose of such an intervention from a postmodern career developing perspective would be to encourage the authoring of a continuous, cohesive career narrative (Cochran, 1992). Current interventions in this genre include mostly reinterpretations of existing interventions (such as vocational assessments) or talk therapy (Savickas, 1992). As postmodern career counseling involves a reflexive process of assisting clients in creating self through writing and revising

biographical narratives taking place in a context of multiple choices from a diversity of options and constraints, the motivation for intervention naturally shifts from emphasizing career fit or matching to empowering clients in the authoring and revising of their vocational narratives (Amundson, 1997; Hermans, 1992; Severy, 2002). Career developing interventions should, therefore, help clients

- Author their life stories by narrating a coherent and continuous story.
- Invest career with meaning by identifying themes and tensions.
- Learn the skills they will need to perform the next chapter in their lives.

There are a variety of tools at the counselor's disposal to help in this process.

Although some researchers and theorists advocate that traditional assessments cannot fit into a postmodern perspective, most feel that vocational assessments can offer valuable assistance (Savickas, 1992). It is this combination of traditional, well-tested tools with a new mindset and new theoretical basis that gives power to the model.

Narrative Career Website

The narrative career website at the heart of this study was developed with this integration of traditional and postmodern in mind. As such, the online tool contained activities designed to help clients author stories in relation to their themes and personal values, interests, important people, and the creation of their personal archetypes (Jepsen, 1994; Ochberg, 1994). As the main emphasis in postmodern career counseling involves meaning-making, most of the activities focused on themes and values (Amundson, 1997; Jepsen, 1994). Mark Savickas advocates for the use of family stories and early recollections for the understanding and interpreting of life stories (1995). He feels that, through a combination of experiences, people develop certain recurring themes in life (Savickas, 1997a). Some of these themes are positive and some are negative (Savickas,

1997a). In general, the concept assumes that the more connected people's life themes are to their career themes, the more personally connected they will feel to their occupations (Savickas, 1995). In addition to life stories, autobiographies and early recollections, there are other approaches that facilitate identification and understanding of life themes (Marko & Savickas, 1998). Basically, any intervention used in which clients are encouraged to tell stories about who they are and what they want can help to encourage critical reflection (Chen, 1997; Forster, 1992). This might include role models, favorite characters, books, movies, or stories about their successes and their failures (Krieshok et al., 1999; Young, Friesen & Borycki, 1994). They might be asked to provide life-lines or chronologies of the major "plot points" in their lives (Savickas, 1995). Whatever the intervention, from subjective to objective, the overall goal is to help the client attach meaning and decide how that meaning will be realized in the next chapter of his or her career narrative (Kidd, 1998; Savickas, 1995; Young, 1995). Asked to identify both the action climaxes and the underlying themes, clients engage on both an emotional and an intellectual level, two elements key in postmodern intervention (Kidd, 1998; Severy, 2002). The website project was designed to integrate these varied approaches and exercises in a way that would empower the client to author his or her own career narrative.

In summary, this project involved the development, use, and evaluation of a new intervention in career counseling. This intervention used a self-help approach and was based upon a narrative theoretical perspective. The goal of the research project was to measure the utility of this newly developed career counseling intervention. Using a pretest/posttest design, the study explored whether or not this new intervention influenced career certainty and indecision as measured by the Career Decision Scale (CDS). The

next chapter will provide a more thorough overview of the existing literature pertinent to this project. Chapter 3 outlines the methodology of the research study. Chapter 4 describes the results and Chapter 5 provides a discussion of the results, implications of the study, limitations, and suggestions for future related research.

CHAPTER 2 REVIEW OF PERTINENT LITERATURE

In order to understand the story behind this research project, it is important to understand the emerging theory, research, and practice from which it has grown. The story begins with postmodern theory and its impact on career counseling. From there, the tale moves towards a review of specific models rising from the postmodern theoretical perspective, including constructivist, action, and narrative models of career counseling. Then, a review of research reflecting these models will be presented. Next, an examination of literature related to self-help career interventions, and specifically workbooks, will help to provide a background for the proposed Narrative Workbook. Finally, a review of the use of the Career Decision Scale (CDS) will provide support for its use as the pretest and posttest assessment for measuring career certainty and career indecision change. Considering these separate storylines and how they came together into the story of this new project should provide information about where the project fits in context and how it contributes to the body of research which currently exists.

Postmodern Theory and Career Counseling

The last twenty years has brought a plethora of writing on the changing concept of career, the limitations of conventional career counseling theory, research, and practice, and proposals for new ways of viewing all three. Numerous theorists and authors have explored the limitations of traditional models of career counseling and the benefits of more postmodern approaches. Themes addressed in these publications include the very meaning of the word “career,” the nature of reality, the elements of self, the role of the

counselor, and a perceived disconnect between theory, research, and practice. Together, these writings provide the fertile ground from which this project grew.

One of the first introductions to the relation between postmodern theory and career counseling came in 1992 from Manuele-Adkins. In her article, Manuele-Adkins synthesized various arguments related to career counseling and personal counseling and the theories that seem to support their interrelatedness. She explored the notion that career counseling, tends to focus on traditional, rational career decision making with a predictive goal. She argued that changes to the world of work and the importance of work roles in cultural identity necessitate a change in approach that integrates more personal, psychological, and meaningful approaches to vocational choice. She also expressed frustration that categorizing psychological self-concept and vocational identity separately creates a barrier to counseling.

In 1998, Kidd summarized recent trends related to career counseling practice in the United Kingdom and addressed some issues introduced by Manuele-Adkins. In the article, she also outlined the changing world of work and the necessity to move from a career planning approach to a career management approach. Her main argument focused on the need for more personal, emotional approaches to career counseling. The value of subjective models, she articulated, is their focus on the client's purpose, passion, and deeper meaning. As career paths become more difficult to describe in predictable generalities, approaches that focus on prediction rather than process are unsuccessful.

The core concept attended to by both Manuele-Adkins and Kidd has to do with the comparison of traditional models, grounded in positivism, and new realities that did not seem to fit positivist assumptions. In helping others to understand the changing nature of career counseling process, Wonacott (2001) outlined the essential assumptions

that separate it from modern, positivist theory. Postmodernism advances a plurality of perspectives wherein multiple accounts, perspectives, and suppositions are respected. Truth and the knowledge of it are not based on a fixed foundation or essence to be identified, but rather exist only in context and are, therefore, open to multiple interpretations. The positivist foundations of science as value neutral and objective, Wonacott argued, need to be rejected. Instead, he said, there should be no concern with a fundamental nature of reality and a view of ideology seeking one correct interpretation of reality is seen as flawed.

Perhaps the most prolific and well-known career counselor focusing on postmodern career counseling is Mark Savickas. Savickas has introduced many new concepts to the practice of postmodern career counseling, but is best known for his ability to summarize and synthesize these complicated concepts. Like others, he focused on the need for something new by describing the confining elements of the old.

Savickas (1993) argued that the move from away from positivism or a “search for truth,” towards perspective or a “search for created meaning” has necessarily brought about a paradigm shift in the practice of career counseling. In fact, Savickas explained that the basic assumptions of perspective change the very nature of career counseling practice.

Savickas (1993) first emphasized the idea that there should be no experts. This is a significant shift in that traditional models grounded in positivism relied on many experts, including the expert counselor or the expert career assessment. Savickas advocated for a shift in perspective from scores to stories. He also proposes that the impression that career counseling depends entirely on testing ignores the rich interactions that postmodern career counseling provides. Also, counselors have changed their

outcome goals from finding fit to enabling freedom of vocational expression. In addition, the process of counseling involves co-authorship of an all-inclusive narrative that includes many elements of work and personal life (Savickas, 1993). This grows from a basic, yet key concept of postmodern career developing, which is that career is personal (Savickas, 1993). Rather than an arbitrary split between factors of one's life, career is viewed as an integral part of the whole self.

Savickas (1993) pointed out that change in this field has been slow because there really are no career development theories to guide the profession as of yet. Instead, he explained that there are counseling theories and theories about occupational choice, but not theory integrating both.

In 1994, Savickas published another article that further elaborated upon his foundation. He defined the postmodern approach to career counseling by concentrating on three specific areas in which postmodern theory differs in emphasis from modern theory. In it, he articulates that postmodern theory defines work as a social activity rather than an individual pursuit. The importance of this concept cannot be overlooked in the inter-relational nature of co-constructed meaning. He described the importance of personal perspective and the changing nature of reality based upon that perspective (Savickas, 1994).

In addition, he addressed an issue not often considered in career theory literature, the issue of utility (Savickas, 1994). He argued that by seeking constructed meaning, postmodern theory only holds value if and when the knowledge becomes useful in practice. If the theory does not become a part of the story of a career counseling practice, it would be left behind as the narrative continues. In this way, postmodern models constantly evolve and reinvent themselves (Savickas, 1994).

In a chapter in the book entitled *Contemporary Models in Vocational Psychology*, Savickas (2001) extended this argument by providing an historical comparison of career psychology movements. He described the constructs generally included in comprehensive theories as including assumptions regarding the nature of individual differences, personal development, self-concept, and context or life roles. While each theory approaches these aspects differently, all focus on them in some way (Savickas, 2001). Savickas then examined each theory to see if there were unifying themes that cross theories. Upon reflection, he characterized career theory as divisible into four levels of analysis including vocational personality types, career concerns or presenting issues, narratives, and mechanisms of career development. In so doing, he encouraged the viewing of narrative career counseling as an evolution of career theory rather than an opposition or reaction to it (Savickas, 2001).

Indeed, this notion of the evolution of career theory rather than a rejection of it is at the heart of literature focused on history. It is important to note that the positivist assumptions that supported traditional models of career counseling fit well into the context of the economic reality in which they emerged. Many authors have commented on the notion that career development models were products of their times and worked well within that context. Other authors have contributed to the body of literature focused on this process and it is important to review their contributions. While it is important to examine these contributions, this literature review will revisit the contributions of Mark Savickas throughout this review as his work has addressed many aspects of this literature.

Zeitgeist and Its Impact on Career Theory

Herr (2001a) provided a timeline for contextualizing career development, vocational guidance, and economic realities. By examining important social, cultural, and

historic events and integrating the influence of those events on career counseling practice, they provided a context for historical theory development. In other words, the theories of career counseling reflected the economic climate of the time.

Herr (2001a) also outlined the theoretical and practical applications of the field of career development. He described the origins of career counseling in vocational guidance, an emergent field produced by the shift from an agricultural to an industrial economy (Herr, 2001a). Whereas families and acquaintances had been the primary source for vocational information in an agrarian economy, the breadth and depth of opportunities in the industrial economy required more comprehensive sources. Community organizations, government agencies, and schools began to provide more vocational assistance to fill this need (Herr, 2001a).

In the 2001 article, Herr detailed Frank Parsons' history and the development of the first formal vocational guidance theory, the "Trait and Factor" approach. In addition, Herr delineated the political and societal implications of vocational choice and the changing definitions of vocational guidance that resulted from those influences. He specifically addressed the globalization of the world of work and the need for career development to reflect those global and multicultural realities. In addition, he advocated for a more holistic, humanistic approach to the field, including the necessity for flexibility in response to a changing work environment (Herr, 2001b).

In Collin and Young's *The Future of Career*, Savickas (2000d) integrated many of his proposed concepts in an historical narrative. He began by spelling out the socio-historical contexts of the meaning of "career" and how those influences have shaped the world of work and, accordingly, career counseling. He illustrated how the agrarian economy of the 1800's produced a work environment firmly entrenched with

multigenerational families. With family farms dominating the economic landscape, the conceptual split between the work self and the home self was arbitrary (Savickas, 2000d). The shift to an industrial economy produced urban environments wherein the worlds of work and home rarely overlapped (Savickas, 2000d). This marked shift first brought the concept of careers to the forefront as bureaucratic, hierarchal organizations came into being (Savickas, 2000d). The “corporate ladder” idea was born in this time and individualistic approaches to success replaced community-based growth (Savickas, 2000d).

During this time period, vocational guidance emerged as a field (Savickas, 2000d). Primarily based upon assessment of skills and interests, guidance specialists matched workers with stable, predictable career paths (Savickas, 2000d). Although not as dramatic a shift as from the agrarian economy, the industrial economy is now moving towards a global, information economy (Savickas, 2000d). Predictable career paths seems to be giving way to varied, self-directed paths wherein employees move from job to job and company to company, advancing through new jobs rather than advancement (Savickas, 2000d).

Traditional career counseling interventions born in the era of predictable career paths found success in rational decision making, independent success, and advancement in a hierarchy (Savickas, 2000d). Their predictive validity and utility, Savickas explained, has been reduced by the new nature of work (2000d). Savickas emphasized that while the earlier career theories provide valuable guidance in terms of person to role fit, newer, more flexible models are actually more effective in the ever-changing work environment (2000d).

The need for new and innovative ways of describing careers in relation to current economic theory drew other theorists to describe the current context of careers. For example, in a short piece outlining work done for the Center on Education and Training for Employment, Imel (2001) described the concept of “free agent workers.” Imel said that this growing class of individuals emerged as a result of changing work patterns and practices. Free agent workers tend to take responsibility for their own career paths and professional futures by marketing their skills and experiences to employers for short time periods. As a group, they are well educated and continue to develop their skill sets, specifically focusing on highly marketable skills. Their career identities are independent of particular employers, are relational in nature, and are non-hierarchical (Imel, 2001).

Successful free agents concentrate on continual learning and connect with colleagues via networking rather than actually working in the same office (Imel, 2001). In describing free agents, Imel outlined the changing nature of career identity and the need for career counseling to change and expand to meet the needs of these workers who blur the line between employee and contractor.

The idea that career theory is reflective of economic circumstances and, therefore, that traditional models applicable in their times no longer fits into a new economic construct sparked many authors to begin narrating a new alternative. For example, in 1995, Hoskins provided a connection between constructivist and narrative theories and their importance to career counseling practitioners. She focused on the importance of meaning making as a co-created vocational reality. In addition, she explained the importance of language in career counseling sessions, the importance of the client’s interpretations of reality, and a shift from a focus on rational exploration to more subject values.

Hoskins (1995) also described the power of metaphor in the career developing process and the necessity to help clients focus on critical reflection. Like Savickas, she also proposed a shift of focus within the profession from one of information giving to empowerment.

Validity of the Concept of Career

In addition to a reaching out for new alternatives, this questioning of traditional models brought some to even question the viability of the concept of career. In *The Future of Career*, Young and Valach (2000) addressed this concern. They attributed the 'death' of career to a number of factors. Like Herr, Savickas, and others, they noted the bureaucratic structure of the industrial age, which provided stable, long-term work-related activities (Young & Valach, 2000). The changing nature of today's workplace makes these predictable patterns obsolete (Young & Valach, 2000). They also point to the traditional focus on individualism as contributing to the decline of the career concept. Traditional career theory focused almost exclusively on the individual and intrapsychic phenomena (Young & Valach, 2000). This notion failed to account for the systemic, interpersonal nature of people in every aspect of their lives, including work (Young & Valach, 2000).

Young and Valach (2000) point to another factor that is more one of omission than commission. The conventional construct of career did not include meaningfulness (Young & Valach, 2000). Without meaning, concepts of career did not account for the relative influence of action, interaction, experience, and interpretation (Young & Valach, 2000). Finally, the long-established view of career erected an arbitrary split between personal and vocational counseling that rendered the career concept useless (Young & Valach, 2000). Young and Valach (2000) proposed a new construct of career that would

address these obstacles. They proposed thinking of career as a series of action, interactions, and short-term projects that constitute a lifetime of vocational pursuits.

Emerging Theory

R. Vance Peavy has been instrumental in articulating the paradigm shift from modern career theory to postmodern career counseling. Peavy (1995) theorized that individuals construct themselves by evaluating and integrating experiences into their perceptions of reality. People demonstrate different stories of themselves in relation to their audiences and attach meanings to their experiences in order to organize the world around them. Critical reflection can help individuals to construct realities that are more personally fulfilling (Peavy, 1995).

In addition, Peavy (1995) explicated the role of the counselor in this process by emphasizing collaborative partnerships, receptive inquiries, and a focus on pattern and theme recognition. He felt that it was important to use only the client's perceptions and construction of reality, rather than spending time wondering about some concrete truth.

Constructivist career assessment, according to Peavy (1996), should encourage clients to actively reflect upon their experiences. He advocated for developing new career assessments that help clients consider the implications of their values, attitudes, dispositions and preferences as well as the meanings behind them. He encouraged the use of autobiography, word sculpting, and interviewing.

In her 2001 article, Brott outlined constructivist assumptions including the inseparable link between person and the environment, the idea that there are no absolute truths, that understanding behavior includes understanding context, and that individuals define themselves and the environment. The process of career counseling involves the co-construction of future-focused narrative between counselor and client (Brott, 2001).

Key components of the storied approach to career counseling include rapport between counselor and client, the use of language and the meaning attached to language, and both qualitative and quantitative vocational assessment (Brott, 2001).

In 1992, Hermans detailed the concept of “valuations” and the ways in which people process their life stories into narratives. Hermans proposed that people reflect upon their experiences and organize them into meaningful narratives. As individuals organize their lives in the context of other relationships and interactions, this can be described as co-constructed for each participant. As a person’s natural inclination is to organize and find meaning in patterns, career developing involves the continuation of a narrative that may be recently constructed or may be part of a lifelong meaning pattern (Hermans, 1992).

In discussing the appeal of such a theory, Hermans (1992) pointed out that the theory encourages, if not requires, clients to take a leading, active role in their own development as a way of organizing their experience. These emerging narratives must continue to make sense over time and protect an organized self-image, while at the same time striking a balance between consistency and growth, order and change, cohesiveness and flexibility. The narrative process helps to bring the general life themes and narratives into the more specific career focus (Hermans, 1992).

In light of all the criticisms of traditional career development and new excitement surrounding postmodern theory, many career counselors began looking for new and exciting approaches that would embrace this new theoretical stance of postmodernism. Narrative career counseling captured the imagination of career counselors like few career theories have. Savickas (1997a) demonstrated why in the introductory chapter of Bloch and Richmond’s *Connections Between Spirit and Work in Career Development*. His

opening sentence illustrates the impact, “Career counseling that envisions work as a quest for self and a place to nourish one’s spirit helps clients learn to use work as a context for self-development,” (p. 3).

By infusing career counseling with concepts such as spirit, character, meaning, and actualization, postmodern theorists form a different picture than the reduction to traits that used to characterize career intervention (Savickas, 1997a). Savickas described the contextual and social aspects of career as a space with the capacity for therapeutic outcomes. He argued that individuals who feel connected to their work find a balance and reward because their external pursuits are reflective of their internal themes and stories.

Savickas (1997a) invited counselors to review their own practice and examine how the rational can become spiritual. In describing the importance of stories, Savickas provided examples of story types and plot lines that can be significant in the explication of life themes including early recollections and role models. These stories tell the counselor how the client organizes and creates meaning. Savickas asked counselors to view career story-telling as nurturing and empowering. In that sense, the individual redefines career success. Career stories that address life themes become solutions to the personal life issues. In turn, those who are successful tend to use that energy to help others, thus completing the cycle of problem, solution, and social contribution (Savickas, 1997a).

As the theory of narrative career counseling has grown, so have the metaphors for describing its power. This has been especially true for Savickas. In June of 2000, Savickas presented a paper at the National Career Development Association conference, characterizing career choice as bricolage or the creation of something new from old bits

and pieces. He described the counselor's role in the process as sifting through remnants and pieces of people's stories to begin to invent a new story.

Savickas (2000b) discussed the three components of the self that need to be addressed in career counseling, including vocational personality type, personal characteristics called career concerns, and the career narratives that help to organize and articulate meaning. By framing the process of career counseling as a sense of building upon what the clients brings to the process, narrative counseling reflects the lived experience of the individual rather than a technical or rational process captured by theories based upon simple matching (Savickas, 2000b).

In bringing together the personal and professional and proposing integrated approaches to career counseling based upon notions of personal storytelling, Savickas has drawn from some of his earlier writings regarding the emotional nature of careers. His foray into this area began with the notion of emotion in career satisfaction. He specifically addressed the need for work/life balance and the concept of that as the symmetry of work and love (1989b).

While many would shy away of addressing the concept of love within a career counseling context, Savickas (1989b) painted a distinct picture of the constructs of both love and work. He described both love and work as social constructions learned by human beings from a cultural context. They are the primary ways in which humans interact with the world (Savickas, 1989b).

Work, on one hand, is future focused (Savickas, 1989b). People work to accomplish something or to allow the opportunity to pursue future pleasures. Love, on the other hand, is timeless and generally experienced in the present. It is a feeling and is, therefore, resident in the individual (Savickas, 1989b).

In the dominant American culture, work is also competitive in nature (Savickas, 2000b). It is what defines individuals and separates one person from another (Savickas, 1989b). Work that is difficult to define may even contribute to identity problems for the individuals who perform that function (Savickas, 1989b). Take, for example, mothers who do not work outside of the home. From ‘stay-at-home moms’ to ‘domestic engineers’, labeling and defining the work of others is important within this society. In contrast, love is relational (Savickas, 1989b).

Savickas (1989b) contends that an imbalance of these two constructs in either direction can cause psychological distress. Those who love too much attach personal, relational attributes to their work and have difficulty when work is not rewarding in the present (Savickas, 1989b). Alternatively, those who work too much may have difficulty enjoying present activities and are always delaying reward (Savickas, 1989b). These concepts become more important within the narrative career counseling movement in that they illustrate the use of metaphor and stories to describe and, ultimately address, career counseling issues. By changing a “work story” to a “love story” counselors can help clients co-author new, balanced narratives (Savickas, 1989b).

A leader in the exploration of narrative career counseling, Larry Cochran continues to develop narrative career counseling models. In 1992, he proposed the idea that career exploration can be viewed as a “career project.” These projects involve the stories used to bring together topics of concern, tasks or actions, personal themes, accomplishments, and meaning (Cochran, 1992). Like Chen and Brott, he emphasized the importance of both themes and tasks in the creation of a career project. He expanded upon this idea by outlining the results of a successful career project including tangible accomplishments such as a degree or job, the cultivation of personal characteristics such

as interests, values, and skills, and the integration of varied personal constructs through narrative.

In the first book outlining a narrative approach to career counseling, Cochran (1997) addressed the noticeable gap between the rich theoretical views of meaning making, development and identity and career counseling practice. Cochran's 1997 work provided a practical framework to address the perceived disconnect between information matching techniques and the deeper needs of humans exploring purpose, passion, and story telling.

Cochran explains his approach by saying that the process is no longer about matching, but rather, "...*emplotment (sic)*; that is how a person can be cast as the main character in the career narrative that is meaningful, productive, and fulfilling" (p. ix). In doing so, he also reframed the frustrating state of career flux as a way of preserving the many potential future selves (Cochran, 1997). By keeping options open, clients keep these multiple selves alive and active, but at the same time delay the deep exploration of one distinctive, self-actualized success story (Cochran, 1997).

Norman Amundson is a researcher and practitioner focused on the use of narrative in career counseling practice. In 1997, he focused on the use of myth and metaphor in the empowered pursuit of career exploration. As narrative career developing focuses heavily on language, Amundson proposed a careful examination of career myths and the barriers created by them. In addition, he described the use of metaphors (like "career as journey" or "career as story") that may help clients become active participants in their own developing (Amundson, 1997). In that way, clients could be empowered to exhibit the courage necessary to boldly move forward in their careers.

In 1997, Chen outlined the role of the individual as an agent in attaching meaning to the interaction of the self and environment. In particular, he focused on how people prepare themselves for a rapidly changing work environment. From a constructivist theoretical framework, Chen proposed various assumptions for the understanding of this created self and environment reality.

In terms of the self, Chen (1997) characterized the self as a variable, changing, fluid concept encompassing a holistic picture of both psychological and physical parts, thinking and acting, being and doing. In addressing career counseling as a developing project, Chen encourages counselors to remember that clients are self-interpreting and that they attach meanings to their experiences and that people can purposefully choose to create their life narratives. Chen emphasized that the creation of meaning through career authorship changes the role of career counseling from outcome-oriented to process-oriented.

In his 1999 article, Gothard outlined the evolution of the “career as myth” theoretical perspective. He illustrated his point by focusing on cultural career mythology such as the “working mother” image or “boot straps” success stories. These more public myths translate into private myths that can be used to help clients contextualize the past, present, and possible selves that fit into the story (Gothard, 1999).

Focused primarily on narrative practices in the field of family therapy, Monk (1993) summarized the influence of narrative practice and its importance as an emerging theoretical perspective. He outlined the strengths of narrative approaches including the recognition of the counselor as partner in the exploration of meaning rather than removed from the process as an external observer. Monk (1993) captured the essence of the narrative model by describing the power of stories. He explained that the stories people

choose to share fit in with their dominant life themes. Other experiences tend to be forgotten or rearranged to fit into the dominant theme. The use of stories then, to recreate, reshape, edit, or otherwise change a story involve the application of a theme in a more positive, therapeutic story (Monk, 1993).

Monk (1993) also explored three important components of narrative: power, curiosity, and externalization. Power is significantly different in a narrative model than in more traditional contexts. Rather than relying on a particular set of knowledge or expertise, narrative counseling relies on the client's experience and the counselor's curiosity for understanding the client's stories (Monk, 1993). In this sense, the client is viewed as expert on their life, experience, and personal themes, while the counselor is the process expert (Monk, 1993). Monk proposed that one of the greatest contributions of the narrative movement has been the recognition of the dramatic influence of external contexts such as culture, experience, society, politics, and economics how they impact client behavior as much as internal psychological factors.

In his chapter in the book *Exploring Identity and Gender*, Ochberg (1994) examined the larger context of stories and the way in which they influence self-identity. Although not directly related to the practice of counseling, his points are important to the general understanding of narrative lives. Ochberg emphasized that self-stories have both private (self) and public audiences and that the interaction with the audience is important in the shaping of the story. For example, a teenager may attend to different aspects of the self-story when talking with a friend or a grandparent. In this way, the self is shaped according to the audience (Ochberg, 1994).

Ochberg (1994) hypothesized that finding an audience for specific self-narrative storytelling is rare (although therapy can be described as one such venue), but that people

instead live out their narratives through their actions and behaviors. Living, therefore, is the process of organizing moments, authoring stories, and arranging them in a specific order that the narrator or individual deems important (Ochberg, 1994). Individual differences are a result of that organization and meaning application (Ochberg, 1994).

Ochberg (1994) also clarified some ideas that are important in the creation of interventions. He argued sequences of events are similar to plots with actions leading to climaxes followed by a relaxation. He supported the idea that the audience is a factor within the storytelling and that the narrative will be shaped by the response of the audience. When the audience responds positively or focuses on a particular theme, that aspect is reinforced and grows within the context of the story. Within the context of the proposed Narrative Career Workbook, these ideas emphasize the importance of considering the self the first audience of the emerging narrative, the need to focus on coherent plots, and the repetition of theme exploration for the purpose of integration.

Savickas explored the audience construct at a conference in 2000. As work constitutes such a large social role in people's lives, the narratives created surrounding work ultimately include an audience (Savickas, 2000c). In other words, work is the way in which we engage the world outside of our homes and, as such, provides the other players in life's dramas. Not only are the narratives people write for themselves presented in front of others, the audience's reactions to those narratives contribute to their shaping in an endless cycle of presentation, feedback, and revision (Savickas, 2000c). The role of the audience is critical to the validation of meaningful career narratives.

Savickas (2000c) proposed four categories of audience including the self, real, imaginary, and introduced. The first spectator is the narrator him or herself. By reviewing and revising one's narrative, the protagonist can continually move towards the

most rewarding story. The real audience is made up of people who interact and influence the client most directly, including the counselor, family, friends, co-workers, and other people (Savickas, 2000c). The imaginary audience does not interact directly with the main character, but rather contributes values, themes, and shared goals (Savickas, 2000c). The imaginary audience may be role models, literary characters, or abstract conceptualizations (Savickas, 2000c). Finally, the invited audience is one that is purposefully introduced into the process for the purpose of information gathering (Savickas, 2000c). This may be a professional contacted for an informational interview, a faculty member, or anyone else who can be invited to hear, process, and contribute to the narrative (Savickas, 2000c).

In addition to narrative models, action models have emerged from postmodern career developing theories. In 1995, Young proposed a more action-oriented approach to career counseling. He argued that career counseling should focus on the goal of moving the client toward purposeful action. Based upon constructivist epistemology, action theory operates on the idea that people organize their daily lives in relation to their experiences and the themes by which they live (Young, 1995).

Action is the external reflection of those internal processes (Young, 1995). The social context in which the action takes place provides the audience and helps to shape the ongoing story (Young, 1995). Rather than focusing specifically on one part of career exploration, namely behavior, cognition, or social meaning, action theory includes elements of all three (Young, 1995). For practitioners, the action approach emphasizes the important of interpretation and reflection by both counselor and client (Young, 1995).

Like others (Manuele-Adkins, 1992; Severy, 2002), Young and Valach (1996) noted that some practioners have found that theory and research have very little value in

their daily practice. They contended that constructivist approaches, specifically action theory, would help to bridge the gap between theory and practice. They noted that these theories are different from long-established vocational guidance in that they no longer view people as represented by relatively stable traits or the environment as characteristics of occupations. Instead, action theory is grounded in the notion that meaning is attached to the concept of career through social, cultural, historical, experiential, and familial relationships and processes (Young & Valach, 1996). Subsequent practice, therefore, involves the process of constructing career through action and language, often through discussion (Young & Valach, 1996).

These perspectives seem to have little in common with the traditional career development theories that came before. While some authors have called for a complete break between the old and the new, others have advocated for a blending of approaches. Savickas led the way in his attempt to integrate the old and the new for the improvement of both. In his chapter in *Career Development Theory & Practice*, Savickas (1992) explored the use of vocational assessment in postmodern career counseling practice.

Savickas (1992) noted that while many counselors are drawn to the participatory nature of narrative practice, traditional assessments are grounded in positivism. While this may provide some difficulty in isolation, when considered within the context of phenomenology, vocational assessments can be quite useful (Savickas, 1992). In other words, counselors viewing vocational assessments as a current snapshot of underlying themes and assumptions can glean valuable information from objective measures.

In fact, Savickas (1992) argued that exploring meaning within results increases the predictive validity of many vocational assessments. Counselors prefer using assessments in this context because it allows for more creative, deeper counseling

conversations and thus increases the counselor's job satisfaction (Savickas, 1992). This paradigm shift in the interpretation of vocational assessments helps counselors to see themselves as more like biographers than actuaries simply reporting results (Savickas, 1992).

Along with specific tools like vocational assessments, Savickas also spent time looking at specific aspects of career development concepts. In 1997, he tackled the traditional construct of Career Maturity. He began by advocating moving the profession from the use of Career Maturity as a construct to Career Adaptability. Savickas argued that the word "maturity" carries too many development, stage, and age connotations to be helpful across the life span (1997b).

Instead, he encouraged the concept of "adaptability" to account for an individual's willingness and ability to incorporate new experiences, attach personal meaning, and create a new reality as a result (Savickas, 1997b). Savickas contended that adaptability is a necessity light of the new global economic models previously discussed (1997b).

Another component of career development Savickas (1995) addressed surrounded the issue of career indecision and how it may be examined and addressed within a constructivist construct. He maintained that vocational guidance traditionally worked with career indecision by measuring and objectifying it. Indecision, he contended, was seen in a dichotomy of decided or undecided.

In contrast, career indecision viewed from a constructivist career counselor's perspective is a sign of upcoming transformation and a change in perspective (Savickas, 1995). Clients who have yet to explore their life themes may experience indecision until they learn more about themselves (Savickas, 1995). Alternatively, indecision may be a

part of someone's ongoing narrative and may, therefore, need to be dealt with outside of the context of career choice (Savickas, 1995).

Whatever the perspective, constructivist counselors can link indecision with past experiences, present perceptions, and future possibilities to help the client see his or her life in narrative (Savickas, 1995). In so doing, the client can begin to create possible future selves that move past the period of indecisiveness (Savickas, 1995).

This model is illustrated through a proposed counseling intervention addressing both the life events or plot of the client's narrative and the timeless, underlying themes of the narrative that remain constant despite changes in life plot (Savickas, 1995). Savickas (1995) described this in sequence as the gathering of client life stories, the reflection of themes back to the client, the examination of the indecision in the context of those themes, the projection of that theme into the future, and the articulation of the skills and behaviors necessary to create that reality.

While many authors focused on research and theory, counselors in the field began to ask for more practical applications. In the introduction to their 1996 textbook, Savickas and Walsh discussed the apparent rift between career theory and academic research related to it and the actual practice of career counseling. They attribute this schism to the growing disenchantment between what practitioners work with in their daily practices and the focus of research and publication attention. In the *Handbook of Career Counseling Theory and Practice*, Savickas and Walsh (1996) invited authors to bridge this gap by addressing the counseling implications of research and theory. In addition, they focused upon narrative and constructivist approaches that developed concurrently in theory and practice and thus naturally influenced each other.

In 2002, Severy addressed this disconnect between career counseling theory and practice. She argued that new theories of career counseling, like narrative and other constructive models, capture the imagination of counseling trainees more than the traditional, objective models. As those objective models are the dominant focus of counselor education programs, Severy called for a revamping of career development courses that would include experiential education, more focus on emerging practices and theories, and an elevation of the focus on career counseling.

The Association for Counselor Education and Supervision (ACES) and the National Career Development Association (NCDA), both affiliates of the American Counseling Association (ACA), specifically addressed the changing nature of career counseling in a joint position paper published in 2000. Primarily authored by Sunny Hansen, the paper explored trends in the concept of careers, an examination of the need for change, description of current practice, and recommendations for curriculum changes in counselor education programs. The primary position involved the idea that counselor education programs have lagged behind theory, research, and practice related to postmodern career counseling, thus resulting in a gap between education and practice. The associations' recommendations included a new approach to career counselor education based upon the above principles, an integrated curriculum of both career and life development theory, professional development for instructors of career counseling, connectedness with other areas such as multiculturalism, the integration of personal and career counseling, an emphasis on core competencies, and the hiring of faculty who specialize in career developing (Hansen, 2000).

These authors contend that by inviting more exchange between theory, research, and counseling, practitioners will be better able to address the needs of specific clients. In

recent years, for example, the use of narrative career counseling with special populations has begun to be explored. In 2000, Semmler and Williams delineated the strength and power of the narrative in multicultural counseling. They argued that traditional counseling approaches put the counselor in the role of “doing” something to the client like diagnosing, interpreting, treating, reflecting feelings, or challenging beliefs.

This dichotomy of counselor as expert doing something to client as recipient created a power imbalance. This disparity was particularly noticeable in cross-cultural counseling. Narrative therapy, in the alternative, provides a more balanced approach wherein the client is the expert on his or her story and the counselor is tasked with learning those stories (Semmler & Williams, 2000).

In addition to power, narrative therapy acknowledges the importance of social roles and the narratives in the dominant culture that may or may not reflect personal narratives (Semmler & Williams, 2000). By examining context as well as process, clients are empowered to create stories embracing all aspects of themselves (Semmler & Williams, 2000). Finally, narrative counseling provides a space for exploring stories significantly different from norm-referenced criteria, which tend to emerge from the dominant cultural narrative and, therefore, may not apply to those on the cultural periphery (Semmler & Williams, 2000).

In a recent article in the *Journal of College Counseling*, Clark, Severy, and Sawyer (2004) explored the use of narrative career counseling for use with a diverse group of college students. The authors argued that the method is particularly useful in that it honors the diverse experiences and backgrounds of participants and creates a collective environment that may be more comfortable with some students. As Semmler and Williams predicted, Clark, Severy, and Sawyer found that the use of narrative

interventions helped to address the needs of those who may fall outside of a traditional norm group. They also found the narrative approach well suited for group counseling in that the members served as both participant and audience and, in that way, helped to shape their own career narratives and the narratives of others.

Postmodern Career Developing Research

Although new theories and proposed models of postmodern career developing have now been in the literature for twenty years, very little practical research on the application of these concepts have been documented. The proposed research project should add to this small body of literature.

Frick (1983) developed an event description he titled the “Symbolic Growth Experience” or SGE. An SGE is a moment of clarity and deeper understanding brought about by external events or by internal, unconscious processes. Frick explained that, in these moments, people become reflective and profound self-interpreters and creative agents in further growth.

Important integrating moments bring the potential for corrective action or development and the Symbolic Growth Experience can be induced through the introduction of experiences (Frick, 1983). By using the SGE as a development tool, counselors can tap into their transforming power to help a client move forward. Activities and actions that help to induce these moments of clarity can be helpful in the process (Frick, 1983).

In 1992, Neimeyer expanded personal construct theory into vocational assessment and discussed two intervention examples. He described personal construct theory as the idea that people actively interpret the meaning of their own experiences. Constructs are

the means by which people assess life events and how they are similar or different from previous experiences (Neimeyer, 1992).

Neimeyer (1992) presented two specific examples for construct theory-based interventions. The first, the Vocational Reptest, involved the client grouping vocations by set of three and articulating the meaning behind these groupings. The counselor gains valuable insights into the client's constructs by the ways in which he or she groups the job titles and meaning the client attaches to those groupings. The second intervention was called a Laddering Technique. This technique involved a structured interview wherein clients describe similarities and differences in various occupations and then rank them based on those assessments. Like the Reptest, the Laddering Technique provides insight into how clients organize occupational information and what is meaningful to them (Neimeyer, 1992).

In 1994, Jepsen examined some of Donald Super's earlier works in relation to postmodern career development theory. Specifically, Jepsen examined Super's Thematic-Extrapolation Method and its potential use in newer, narrative models. Jepsen described the Thematic-Extrapolation Method as the first attempt to use historical information on patterns and themes as predictive of future career problem. He distinguished between these approaches, which he dubbed "developmental methods" with those relying on objective measures, referred to as "actuarial methods." Jepsen recommended applying Super's concepts within career counseling so as to focus on the collaborative process involving both client and counselor. He emphasized the importance of keeping the client actively engaged in the process of theme exploration (Jepsen, 1994).

In an interesting extension of narrative career theory, Young, Friesen, and Borycki (1995) used reflective narratives to understand the career histories of high school

students and parental influence on choice. In the study, they evaluated narratives of fifty students and found five common career and family themes. These included stories with dramatic turning points, positive progressive narratives, progressive narratives with negative stages, anticipated regressive narratives, and sad narratives.

In the stories that included a dramatic turning point, students were able to change the outcome of a life story, usually from a failure story to a success story (Young, Friesen, & Borycki, 1994). In positive progressive narratives, students felt that their stories were predetermined in a positive way. In progressive narratives with negative stages, the storyteller described a positive outcome despite negative parental influence. The anticipated regressive narrative group included stories in which the student felt that there would never be a reconciliation between the parents' career narratives and their own. Finally, the last group included those with no career story and a general despair related to life goals (Young, Friesen, & Borycki, 1994).

The authors examined the narratives in order to examine the cultural understanding of careers generally established by parents (Young, Friesen, & Borycki, 1994). In addition, the narratives reflected directly on the interpersonal relationships between parents and children. Finally, they dramatically expressed how the child felt about his or her relationship to the family and what he or she believed would be the relationship to the world outside of the family (Young, Friesen, & Borycki, 1994).

In describing a new narrative-based career counseling intervention, Emmett and Hawkins (1997) further explored the theoretical, research, and practical applications of a narrative approach. Rather than matching clients into a career to position fit, career counselors working from a narrative framework helped clients create meaning for the purpose of belonging and participating. Described as an editor or perhaps co-author, the

counselor in a narrative model helped clients to articulate their stories, interpret and attach meaning, and begin to consider future directions for their stories. Emmett and Harkin's intervention, called StoryTech, is like a guided imagery exercise focused on the imagining of potential future selves. The instrument includes a series of open-ended statements dealing with multiple career-self themes (Emmett & Harkins, 1997). The instrument is primarily used in career development courses and participants rate the instrument as helpful in terms of career reflection (Emmett & Harkins, 1997). Participants also liked the ability to work independently on their career developing and then using the group interpretation as a place to interact with others (Emmett & Harkins, 1997).

In 1999, Krieshok, Hastings, Ebberwein, Wettersten, and Owen applied the concepts of narrative career counseling to a specific population and studied the usefulness of the approach. Participants in the project were all clients of the Vocational Rehabilitation Services in the Veterans Administration Medical system. Due to the chronic nature of vocational problems within this population, counselors were interested in applying the use of story telling within their practice. Within the counseling context, clients were encouraged to move away from problem-dominated narratives towards more positive, outcomes- based stories. In general, the counselors found that those clients who were able to articulate future-based, complete narratives were successful in implementing those stories (Krieshok et al., 1999). The authors stress that framing the counseling intervention as helping clients tell and re-write their stories seemed to help in the rapport building and in getting the clients to engage in an otherwise frightening process (Krieshok et al., 1999).

Sally Gelardin is a career counselor and instructor who focuses on familial relationships and their influence on career decision-making. In 2001, she authored an article related to the use of narratives in the healing process. In it, she addressed the mother-daughter relationship and its link to career decision-making. Gelardin builds upon the Peavy's constructivist concepts by emphasizing the seven critical assumptions in narrative constructivist career theory. These include the concepts that "reality" is not an external unit but rather is relatively interpreted within each person; that people are more than a collection of traits, but rather an organized being centered around certain life themes; that people's lives can be described as stories or collections of stories; that people attach meaning to their lives and their experiences; that individuals interpret themselves and their experiences as they live their lives and, therefore, are constantly revising their stories according to their own interpretations; that individuals have multiple voices and, therefore, multiple stories; and that the process of self-authoring and reflection can be empowering (Gelardin, 2001b).

Building upon these assumptions, Gelardin (2001b) proposed exercises designed to explore life themes and examine interactions from a narrative perspective. Later in 2001, she built upon this model in addressing the needs of trauma victims, like those affected by the September 11th tragedies (Gelardin, 2001a). In a workshop presented at the International Career Development Conference, she outlined how the utilization of career narratives could positively impact the lives of trauma victims (Gelardin, 2001a). Like Savickas, Gelardin proposed a healing potential in career growth wherein work can become part of the therapeutic process when negative life themes are addressed in a more positive way and positive life themes are expressed in work settings.

Self-Help Career Interventions

Putting postmodern and narrative concepts into practice for the current project required conceptualizing a mode of intervention delivery applicable to the population. Literature pertaining to self-help interventions, and specifically career workbooks, helps provide that foundation.

Richard Nelson Bolles' *What Color is Your Parachute?* has been one of the best selling self-help career books since its first edition was released over thirty years ago. The success of the book has been largely based on the popularity of self-help approaches that allow individuals to process information at their own pace, are cost effective, and can be done privately (Bolles, 2004). By including exercises designed to self-assess career-related components, the book follows a traditional model of person to environment matching.

In 1992, Forster capitalized on this idea and developed a self-administered workbook based upon the Personal Construct Psychology (PCP). The workbook, titled *Goals Review & Organizing Workbook (GROW)*, is a series of structured exercises designed to help clients determine which constructs will be meaningful to them in their self-understanding and exploration. Using a self-help model, the workbook guides clients through the process of goal setting by the creation of what Forster calls "desired anticipations" (Forster, 1992).

Following national trends towards self-directed career developing tools, the Florida Community College at Jacksonville's Career Options Workbook was developed by Harr (1992) to help students take control over their career exploration at their own pace. The booklet contains four sections including a career planning component, self-assessment piece, informational resources, and a plan for further action.

Designed to help students with their career-decision making, the Alaska Career Exploration Workbook (1995) focuses on self-exploration. The book includes checklists, exercises, guidelines and other tools to facilitate self-exploration.

O'Brien developed a workbook in 1997 for use with community college students. The book is divided into components. The first section includes exercises designed to encourage clients to dream of careers with no obstacles, limitations, or barriers. The second involves a more structured vocational self-assessment. The third integrates the first and second sections as well as introducing the idea of obstacles and other "realities" that need to be addressed in turning the lofty dream into a reality. The book closes with resources designed to give students direction for further research. Although no quantitative research has been done on the effectiveness of the workbook, the design is popular with students who prefer self-directed interventions rather than counseling (O'Brien, 1997).

In 2000, Clardy drew from growing literature on Self-Directed Learning Projects to explore a subset of these projects that could be considered vocational. Initiated, planned, and controlled by the individual and focused on learning about job, vocational, or occupational subjects, these Vocationally Oriented Self-Directed Learning Projects were studied with adult employees of a government agency (Clardy, 2000). Clardy found that the most successful projects were voluntary in a nature and afforded the learner control over project pacing (2000).

The Internet has provided a new forum for engaging students in career self-help activities. In the past ten years, many of the most popular vocational assessments, including the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI), the Strong Interest Inventory (SII),

and the Campbell Interest and Skills Survey (CISS) as well as many others have been made available online.

Career Decision Scale

In order to evaluate the effect of the intervention on career decidedness, the Career Decision Scale will be used in a pre/post test design. In comparing the Career Decision Scale with other career choice process measures, Savickas (1989a) recognized the common use of the Career Decision Scale in measuring the impact of interventions geared toward improving career choice capacity. He maintained that tools used for evaluative purposes should be selected on the basis of which scale or scales most closely coincides with the objectives of the intervention (Savickas, 1989a).

In this case, the Career Decision Scale, including both the Certainty Scale and the Indecision Scale were be used to measure the degree of certainty and decidedness to measure whether the online intervention impacts these constructs. Savickas (1989a) notes that the Career Decision Scale has been accepted as the best measure for use with college students as it addresses choice of college major. In 2000, Savickas contributed a chapter to Watkin and Campbell's *Testing and Assessment in Counseling Practice: Contemporary Topics in Vocational Psychology*. In it, Savickas (2000a) provided details on many assessment instruments, including the Career Decision Scale. He noted that its validity, cost, and relatively short length make it a good choice for using in the evaluation of vocational interventions and educational programs. Also, in Harmon's 1994 review for the Mental Measurements Yearbook, she describes the Career Decision Scale as the best choice for researchers and evaluators seeking an overall measure of career indecision and change.

Further, in 1996, Osipow, one of the developers of the original Career Decision Scale, and Winer examined the history and use of the Career Decision Scale. They indicated that the most common use of the Career Decision Sale is as a tool for evaluating career counseling intervention outcome. They characterized the use the scale in pre/post test designs as a measure of intervention effectiveness (Osipow, & Winer, 1996).

For example, in 1987, Dorn utilized this design in studying the effectiveness of a workshop for college students choosing majors. Mau and Jepsen used two scales from the instrument in 1992 to study the effects of two different decision-making strategies. Kush and Cochran (1993) also used the Career Decision Scale to investigate the effectiveness of a workbook designed for use with students and parents. In 1993, Spokane and Fretz used the Career Decision Scale, along with various other instruments, to study the impact of personal development counseling on career decision.

In 2001, Peng utilized the Career Decision Scale in a pre/post test design to gauge the effectiveness of career education coursework on college freshmen. In their study of the relationship between career maturity, age, and gender, Patton and Creed used the Career Decision Scale as a determination of readiness to make career decisions. They highlighted the Career Decision Scale as useful in providing an index for the evaluation of career interventions (Patton & Creed, 2001).

This research project, which is described in detail in the next chapter, integrated many questions emerging from this review of relevant literature. The study addressed the utility of combining elements of narrative career developing with the self-guided mode of career intervention delivery. As suggested by many postmodern theorists, the website contained elements of traditional vocational assessment within a new framework as well

as exercises specific to newly theorized models (Cochran, 1997; Kidd, 1998; Savickas, 1992).

The impact of the intervention on career decidedness should add to the body of knowledge regarding the practical implications of postmodern career developing and may contribute to the connections between theory, research, and practice. In addition, the study outcome has implications for use in practice. Finally, it should contribute to the relatively small body of practical application research within the theory of postmodern, narrative career development intervention.

CHAPTER 3 METHODS

The overall goal of the study was to address the utility of combining elements of narrative career developing with a self-guided mode of career intervention delivery. Specifically, the project examined whether a narrative, web-based intervention would be useful in decreasing career indecision and increasing career certainty as measured by the Career Decision Scale (CDS). It was hypothesized that the intervention would decrease career indecision and increase career certainty as measured by pre-test/post-test differences as well as compared to the control group. This section details the experimental design that was employed, describes the study procedures including design and recruitment processes, describes the instrumentation that was used, and addresses the main analytic approaches that provided the ultimate test of the approach.

Overall Design

In order to examine the impact of the intervention, a pre-test/post-test design was employed using the Career Decision Scale (CDS) as a measure of career certainty and career indecision. Recognizing that the use of the Career Decision Scale (CDS) may impact the outcome of the study and, therefore, introduce interaction effects, a specific research design was selected to control for that possibility. In other words, the methodology was designed specifically to see where testing effects impacted or interacted with actual intervention effects.

Numerous variables could have impacted the outcome of the study including the intervention, the pretest, and the time delay between the pretest and the posttest. The experimental design was specifically selected to control for the two variables other than

the main intervention. The experimental design was based upon the Solomon Four-Group Design (Solomon, 1949). This design was selected to investigate the main intervention effect while controlling for the effect of the pretest or the time between the pretest and the posttest (Creswell, 2002; Trochim, 2001; Van Engelenburg, 1999). Volunteer participants who created online accounts were randomly assigned by the system into one of four groups. The first group completed the Career Decision Scale (CDS) as a pretest, the online intervention, and the CDS as a posttest. The second group completed the online intervention and the CDS as posttest only. The third group completed the CDS pretest followed by the CDS posttest after a two-week waiting period (with no intervention). Finally, the fourth group completed only the CDS posttest. The design was selected to help determine if the intervention influenced Career Certainty and Career Indecision (as measured by the CDS subscales) while removing the testing threats presented by pretests and posttests. This design is represented in Table 1.

Table 1 : Project Solomon Four-Group Design

Group One	CDS	Online Intervention	CDS	Questionnaire
Group Two		Online Intervention	CDS	Questionnaire
Group Three	CDS	Time Delay	CDS	
Group Four			CDS	

Therefore, there were four possible outcomes of the study: a treatment effect with no testing effect, treatment and testing effects, a testing effect and no treatment effect, or no effect. To be more specific, first, the online intervention could have impacted participants' scores on the Career Decision Scale (CDS) independent of any effects from the pretest. Second, the CDS pretest could impact participants' scores on the CDS independent of any effects from the intervention. Third, both impacts might have

occurred or the intervention and CDS could have interacted with each other to impact participants' scores on the CDS. Fourth, there could have been no impact on participants' scores by either the intervention or the CDS pretest. All participants in the intervention groups were also asked to complete a short questionnaire seeking feedback about the website itself (see appendix A).

Career Decision Scale

In order to evaluate the effect of the intervention on career decidedness, the Career Decision Scale (CDS) was used in a pretest/posttest research design. As discussed in the review of the literature, although there is no one generally accepted measure of career interventions impact, the CDS is widely used and recognized as the best measure of career choice capacity (Osipow, 1987; Osipow, 1999; Osipow, & Winer, 1996; Savickas, 1989a). Savickas (1989a) advocated for using change measurement tools that most closely coincide with the intended objectives of the intervention. In this case, the measurement of career certainty and career indecision from pretest to posttest and between experimental groups was well represented in the subscales of the CDS.

The Career Decision Scale (CDS) including both the Career Certainty and Career Indecision subscales was used as the pretest and posttest to measure career indecision. With permission and special arrangement with the Psychological Assessment Resources (PAR), the copyright holders for the CDS, the questions were transferred from the paper version of the instrument to an electronic version that could be administered online. Participants indicated how closely each statement reflected their current thinking by ranking the item on a 1-4 scale with four being "exactly like me," three being "very much like me," two being "only slightly like me," and one being "not like me at all." The CDS is divided into two subscales, the Certainty Scale measures the degree of certainty a

student feels about his or her career decision-making and the Indecision Scale describes the client's level of indecision.

Participants

Volunteers were recruited at the University of Florida and the University of Colorado at Boulder to participate in this research study designed to test the effectiveness of a new career and personal exploration tool. The study was conducted in conjunction with the career services office on both campuses. An email was created asking student volunteers to participate in an online career development study. At the University of Florida, the email was circulated to instructors of a freshman orientation class as well as academic advisors with a request that it be circulated to students. At the University of Colorado at Boulder, the email was sent directly to all freshman and sophomores on campus.

Volunteers who went to the web address listed in the advertisement email created an online account by reading and agreeing to the Informed Consent. The website then randomly assigned participants to one of the four study groups.

Although twenty-five participants completing the tasks in each group was the original target for enrollment, power analyses indicated that twenty-two participants per cell would generate a 90% power to correctly detect a one standard deviation difference in mean scores with an alpha of .05 (Hintz, 2001). Further, only seventeen participants per cell were required to generate an 80% power to detect the same difference at the .05 alpha (Hintz, 2001). Therefore, while twenty-five participants per cell represented an ideal target, it was determined that even seventeen per cell would be acceptable. It was decided that the data collection would be suspended when each group reached the point wherein at least twenty members of that group had completed the project.

Instrumentation

The designed online intervention contained an introduction, eight activities, and a summary section. Participants were encouraged to proceed through the activities at their own pace with no specific timeline specified for each activity. The first section introduced the idea of career as a personal narrative, authored by individuals. The first actual activity was based upon narrative career developing constructs and was designed to illicit life themes. The second exercise also involved narrative and focused on personal timelines and life events. The third task centered on the use of role models to further explore themes. The fourth task was a more traditional intervention of a skills checklist. In it, participants were asked to explore what particular skills they would like to include within their storylines. The fifth exercise was loosely derived from interest typology and included seven genres or categories of interests in which the personal narrative would be set. The sixth task addressed the contextual nature of career developing by asking the author to establish a set of characters including current life-role participants and proposed participants, like a future spouse or children. The next assignment returned to the elicitation of themes by exploring personal life roles. The final exercise provided space for integrating the various themes, interests, skills, and other information in the formulation of the career narrative. The conclusion provided participants with information about how to begin using the narrative they created. A text version of the online activities is included in appendix D.

Data Analysis

Once all data were collected and the Career Decision Scale (CDS) scored, a number of statistical approaches were employed. First, very basic scaling analyses testing for Cronbach's alpha (reliability) were conducted to test the internal structure of the CDS in this sample population (Creswell, 2002). Next, basic t-tests and analyses of

variance were used to compare between participant groups (Creswell, 2002). In addition, analyses of variances were used within groups to examine whether using the pretest affected the posttests, and more importantly, whether pretests interacted with the experimental intervention to create the final CDS scores. The dependent variables within the analyses were the Career Indecision and Career Certainty subscales as measured by the CDS. The two groups with pretests allowed for a check on the random assignment process. The experimental groups were then compared with their respective control groups.

In addition to the quantitative data, participants in the two groups who were exposed to the intervention also completed a questionnaire providing them an opportunity to give feedback on the project. This questionnaire was included as an evaluative component for the participants. There were four questions including an overall assessment of the web project, an opportunity to provide feedback on each activity, a rating of the sites helpfulness in facilitating career developing, and a question as to whether or not the participant would recommend the site to others. A copy of the evaluation page is included in appendix A.

Hypotheses

This study examined four dependent variables both involving scores on the Career Decision Scale (CDS) and its Career Certainty and Career Indecision subscales: the change in CDS score from pretest to posttest and the comparison of posttest scores. An alpha level of .05 was used to determine whether any differences found in the means of the groups measured were greater than by chance alone. This level represents the risk of rejecting the null hypotheses in error (Creswell, 2002). The following null hypotheses were tested:

1. There will be no difference between the experimental and control groups from the pretest to the posttest as measured by the Career Certainty subscale of the Career Decision Scale (CDS).
2. There will be no difference between the experimental and control groups from the pretest to the posttest as measured by the Career Indecision subscale of the CDS.
3. There will be no difference in posttest scores between the experimental and control groups as measured by the Career Certainty subscale of the CDS.
4. There will be no difference in posttest scores between the experimental and control groups as measured by the Career Indecision subscale of the CDS.

Limitations

Volunteers for this study were drawn from a pool of college students and not from the population at large. Therefore, results are only applicable to those college students who would be so inclined as to volunteer for a new web-based career developing exercise. In addition, study conclusions will be limited to populations of college students. Future research would be necessary to explore its impact on other populations.

Methodology Summary

Overall, this study was designed to research the effectiveness of an online career intervention based upon a narrative model of career development. Volunteer participants accessed the website and were randomly assigned to one of four groups, two control groups and two experimental groups. The use of these four groups followed the Solomon Four-Group Design selected to control for possible interaction effects within groups from pretest to posttest as well as any main effects. The volunteers were solicited via email at the University of Florida and the University of Colorado at Boulder. As all participants were students at these institutions, the main limitation of the study is that it is limited to a college population.

CHAPTER 4 RESULTS

Advertising for volunteer participants began in January of 2005. Participants were directed to the website at www.YourCareerStory.com to create an account. In order to create an account, the volunteer was required to read and agree to the Informed Consent document. Those who did not agree were directed to a page of alternative resources. Participants were randomly assigned by the online system to one of the four study groups, which resulted in the distribution described in Table 2.

Table 2: Group Distribution

	Number of Participants	Percentage of Participants	Number of Completions	Percentage of Completions within Group
Group One	193	26.84%	21	4.76%
Group Two	174	24.20%	20	11.49%
Group Three	183	25.45%	61	33.33%
Group Four	168	23.37%	114	67.85%

The study was launched with the expectation that the site would remain active until a minimum number of participants in each group had completed the assigned tasks. It quickly became apparent upon the launching of the site that the control groups would finish quickly while the experimental groups would take much longer. In addition, the site was more popular than initially anticipated. The site was left open through the middle of September when a total of at least twenty people in each group completed the project. During that time, 719 volunteers created accounts and accepted the online

informed consent (see Table 2 for details). Of the 719 people who created accounts, only 216 actually completed the tasks assigned for their groups.

When it became apparent that retention in the project would be an issue, the original Informed Consent (see appendix B) was amended to add an incentive for those participants who completed the study in any group (see appendix C). This modification boosted completion rates. The start of the fall semester on campus also provided a spike in the number of new users that ultimately led to enough participants finishing each group to provide necessary power for statistical analyses.

Participants

Demographic information was collected for all participants who created accounts and agreed to the Informed Consent. Questions were open-ended and included college or university, major, gender, ethnicity, age, and class standing. Of the 216 participants who completed the tasks assigned for their group, 82 (38%) were from the University of Colorado at Boulder and 134 (62%) from the University of Florida. Seven (3%) participants identified as African American/Black, 15 (7%) as Asian/Asian American, 18 (8%) as Hispanic/Latino, and 173 (80%) as White/Caucasian. Three participants chose not to answer the ethnicity question. There was a slightly higher participation rate for females than for males with 59% of the completions coming from females. Ages ranged from 18-years-old to 49-years-old, with the mean and median age being 20-years-old, the mode age being 19-years-old. The distribution of class standing leaned more towards people finishing their degrees with only 12% freshman, 19% sophomores, 28% juniors, and 41% seniors. In addition to a few undeclared/open option/or exploring majors, there was also a broad range of majors including business, liberal arts, sciences, health, journalism, theater, and technical majors.

Statistical Analyses

First, very basic scaling analyses testing for Cronbach's alpha (reliability) were conducted to test the internal structure of the Career Decision Scale (CDS) in this sample of participants. Analyses of the sixteen-item Indecision Scale generated an acceptable alpha (estimate of reliability) at .77 at pretest and at posttest (which included more participants as all four groups took the posttest) a slightly higher alpha of .79. These results indicated that the Indecision Scale of the CDS has a good internal structure. The Certainty Scale of the CDS contains too few items for this type of analysis (although the two items were highly interrelated with $r = .47, p < .0001$).

Group Comparisons

The first comparison addressed the question as to whether the two groups with pretests started with the same general scores. Neither the Certainty Subscale (means 4.90 and 4.57; $t(80) = -.788, p = .43$) nor the Indecision Subscale (means 34.81 and 33.23; $t(80) = -.877, p = .38$) were significantly different from one another statistically. Hence, randomization seems to have been effective.

Statistical analyses indicated a change in both the Certainty Scale (CS) and Indecision Scale (IS) of the Career Decision Scale (CDS) for both the experimental and control group taking the pretest and posttest. Participants in both groups experienced an increase in career certainty and a decrease in career indecision as measured by the CDS. One way to examine these results was to compare the rate of improvement (career certainty increasing and career indecision decreasing) for both the groups. The improvement for the intervention group was significantly higher than for that of the control group (see Figure 1). In fact, for CS, the experimental group improved 1.238 to

.508 over the control group ($F(1,80) = 4.565, p < .05$), and for IS, the improvement was -3.857 to -.820 as lower scores indicate less indecision ($F(1,80) = 4.590, p < .05$).

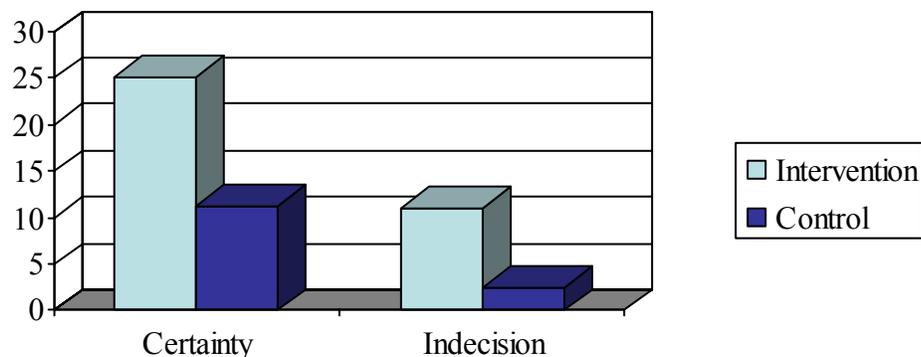


Figure 1: Percent Improvement by Group, Pretest to Posttest

All four groups were given the Career Decision Scale (CDS) as a posttest for outcome comparison on both the Certainty Scale and the Indecision Scale. By considering the four groups and their level of participation in career-related activities, the impact on posttest scores followed a logical pattern. The group doing the most activity including pretest Career Decision Scale (CDS), the new intervention, and the posttest CDS, generated the most positive scores at post test. The group completing the intervention and the posttest CDS exhibited the next best posttest scores. The group receiving the CDS as pretest and posttest (but no intervention) experienced the third best scores and the last group (receiving only the CDS posttest) scored the lowest on the posttest (see Figures 2 and 3).

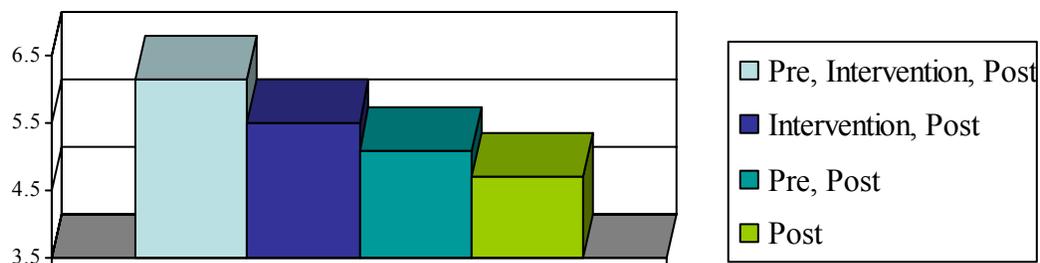


Figure 2: Certainty Scale at Posttest by Group

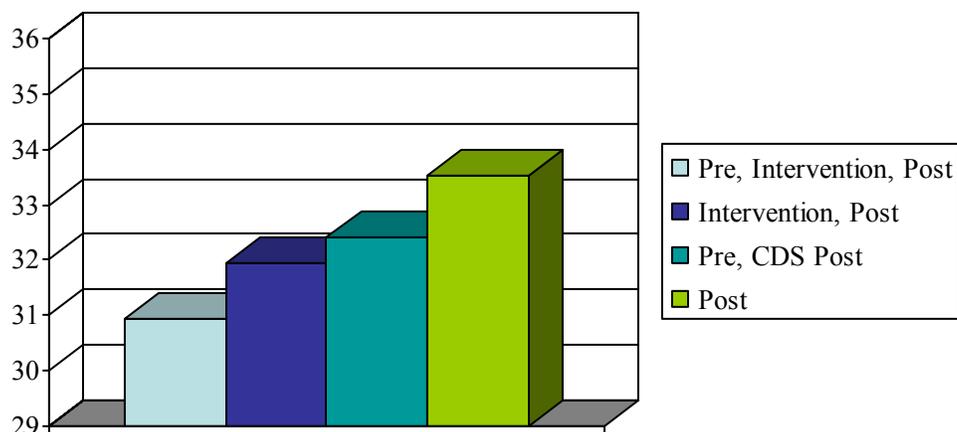


Figure 3: Indecision Scale at Posttest by Group

Group comparisons indicate that the experimental groups were significantly different from the control groups for both the Certainty Scale and the Indecision Scale, indicating that the intervention had a significant influence on outcome. A set of simple t-tests indicated that at posttest, Group I participants were significantly better CS scorers than those in Groups II and Group III. Then, two separate analyses of variance were run to examine the within subjects repeated measure factor (for both CS and IS scales), the interaction of the repeated measure and group membership, and the between subjects factor of group membership. In both of these analyses, the repeated measure factor showed significant improvement with a significant interaction effect. In other words, the extent of improvement depended upon the group participants were in (intervention versus control). For CS the repeated measure, $F(1,80) = 23.82, p < .0001$; and the interaction $F(1,80) = 4.59, p < .05$; group membership approached significance with $F(1,80) = 3.74, p = .057$. For IS as the repeated measure, $F(1,80) = 10.82, p < .0001$, and the interaction $F(1,80) = 4.565, p < .05$; group membership was not significant. These findings are depicted in Figures 4 and 5.

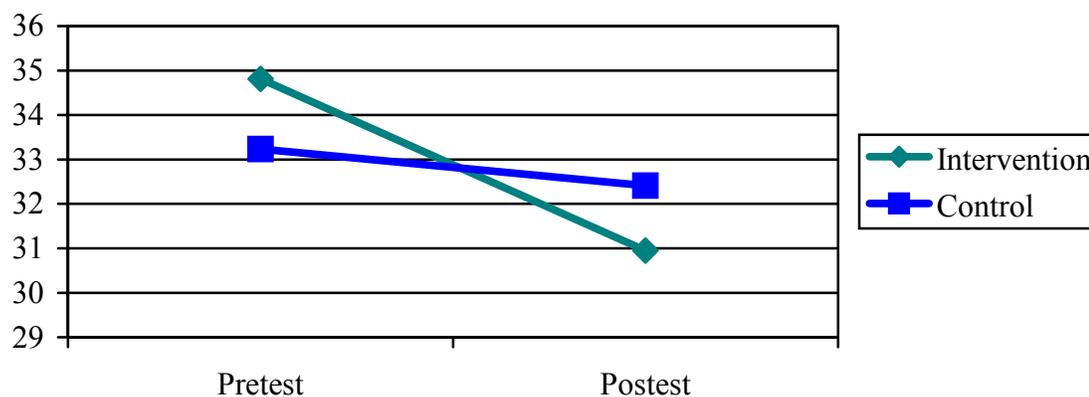


Figure 4: Indecision Scale Comparison

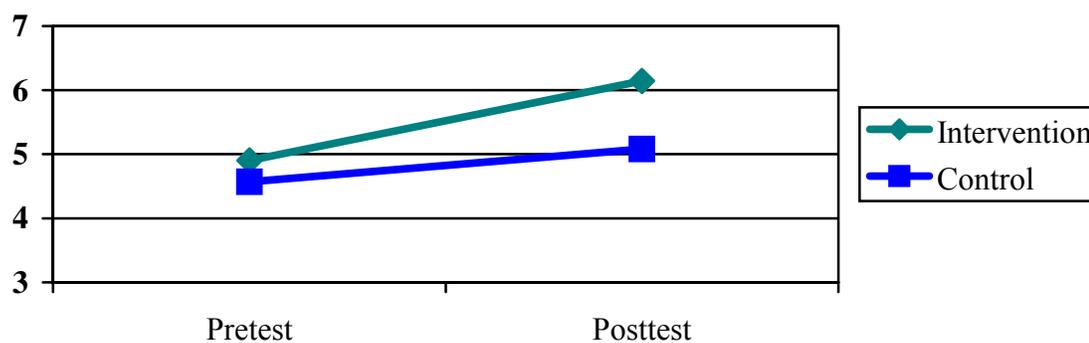


Figure 5: Certainty Scale Comparison

One last exploratory analysis was performed. Specifically, all 216 completed participants were included in a cluster analysis dependent upon all 18 items of the posttest Career Decision Scale. A two-factor cluster emerged with significantly different profiles across the 18 items. One of these groups had 126 members while the other 90 members. As depicted in Figure 6, those in the larger group report statistically better scores (higher certainty and lower indecision) on the items than those in the smaller group. As depicted in Figure 7, participants who did not receive the intervention had an even chance of being in the group with better scores, while those who received the intervention were four times more likely to be in the group with better scores ($\chi^2(3, N=216) = 9.29, p = .03$).

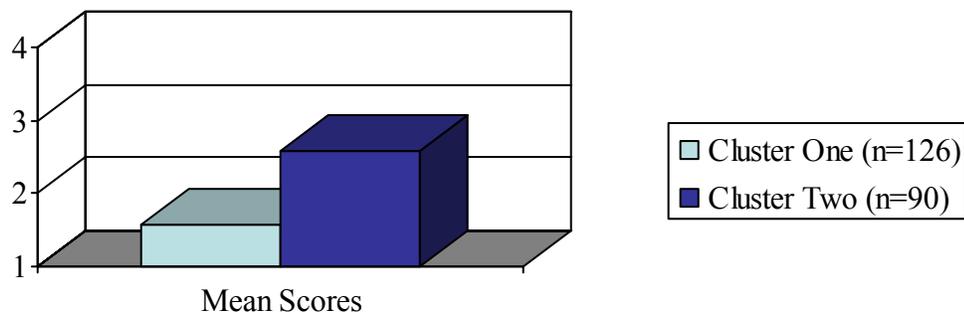


Figure 6: Factor Clusters (Lower Scores Indicate Better Certainty)

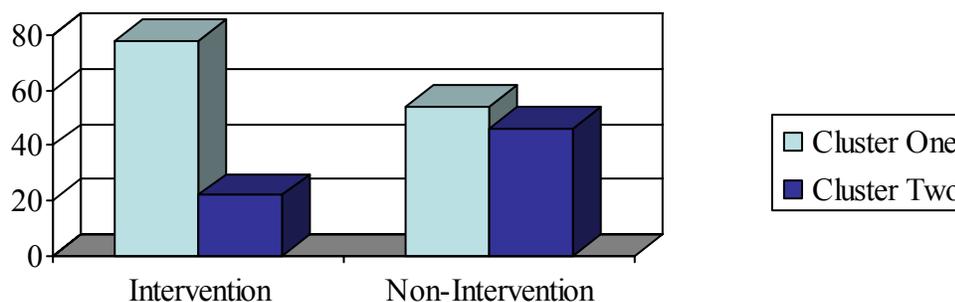


Figure 7: Comparison of Cluster Membership as a Function of Intervention

This study examined four dependent variables both involving scores on the Career Decision Scale (CDS) and its Career Certainty and Career Indecision subscales: the change in CDS score from pretest to posttest and the comparison of posttest scores. An alpha level of .05 was used to determine whether any differences found in the means of the groups measured were greater than by chance alone. The following null hypotheses were tested:

1. There will be no difference between the experimental and control groups from the pretest to the posttest as measured by the Career Certainty subscale of the Career Decision Scale (CDS).
2. There will be no difference between the experimental and control groups from the pretest to the posttest as measured by the Career Indecision subscale of the CDS.
3. There will be no difference in posttest scores between the experimental and control groups as measured by the Career Certainty subscale of the CDS.

4. There will be no difference in posttest scores between the experimental and control groups as measured by the Career Indecision subscale of the CDS.

Based upon the statistical analyses of the data, all four null hypotheses were rejected. There were significant differences between the experimental and control groups from pretest to posttest as well as significant differences between groups on the posttest in both the Career Certainty and the Career Indecision Scales of the CDS.

Evaluation

The results of the evaluation given to the experimental groups are summarized in Table 3. The most highly rated activity was the “Interests & Genre” activity followed closely by the “What Do I Really Want” and “Autobiography” activities. The final question posed to participants on the evaluation asked if they would recommend the web site to other students. Of the forty-one participants, thirty-one indicated that they would refer others, almost 76 percent.

Table 3: Evaluation Means per Activity

	Likert Scale Mean
Overall Rating	3.536
Activity One: Early Memories	3.56
Activity Two: Autobiography and/or Timeline	3.804
Activity Three: Role Models	3.756
Activity Four: What Do I Really Want?	3.926
Activity Five: Interests & Genre	4.073
Activity Six: Casting Characters	2.975
Activity Seven: Themes/ Your Role	3.731
Activity Eight: Pulling it All Together	3.56

CHAPTER 5 DISCUSSION

This project involved the development, use, and evaluation of a new self-help intervention in career counseling. In keeping with the theoretical perspective that clients should have complete authorship of their life stories, the intervention was a guided tour of various aspects of the career development process. The research hypothesis stated that the online, self-help career intervention would have a positive impact on the career indecision and career certainty of the participants. There were four possible outcomes of the study. First, the online intervention could have impacted participants' scores on the Career Decision Scale (CDS) independent of any effects from the pretest. Second, the intervention and CDS could have interacted with each other to impact participants' scores on the CDS. Third, the CDS pretest could have impacted participants' scores on the CDS independent of any effects from the intervention. Fourth, there could have been no impact on participants' scores by either the intervention or the CDS pretest.

Volunteer participants were recruited at the University of Florida and the University of Colorado at Boulder. Overall, 719 participants created accounts. Of those, 216 actually finished their assigned tasks, the majority of those in the control groups. The data collection phase of the study remained open until a minimum of twenty people in each study group completed the entire activity, which took approximately eight months.

Results indicated that both the Career Decision Scale (CDS) and the intervention impacted outcomes. The intervention and the pretest measurement tool (CDS) interacted with each other to impact participants' posttest scores. The outcomes seem to fit well

with theorists and researchers advocating for a more constructivist narrative rather than a reductionist approach to career exploration (Manuele-Adkins, 1992; Kidd, 1998; Wonacott, 2001; Savickas, 1993). In addition, both the quantitative outcomes and the evaluation results suggested that the combination of traditional and narrative exercises can be helpful for those who are exploring careers in the new world of work (Savickas, 1992). In fact, of the three most popular exercises (as reported by participants in the final evaluation), one would be considered traditional and two new, postmodern approaches.

It is clear that the intervention was helpful in increasing participants' career certainty while decreasing their career indecision. The fact that participants with the best scores (high certainty and low indecision) were four times more likely to have done the intervention than not was an important indicator of the potential impact of this type of intervention.

By asking participants to expand exploration of career interest, skills, personality, and values into the realms of spirituality, purpose, meaning, and mission, this online tool brought a new dimension to online career development tools. While not all of the participants reported that the website was *very helpful* in terms of their career development, most of them indicated that they would recommend the site to a friend. This may indicate some confusion on the part of the participants in that they were not sure about the concept of career development but liked and would recommend the site as a whole.

At the same time, the number of participants in the experimental groups who abandoned the project without finishing was troublesome. The length of the project and the amount of writing involved may have deterred people from finishing. Further research is needed to determine if pairing the online tool with individual or group

counseling may increase the retention rate and help provide the motivation necessary to complete the online assessment.

Limitations

Volunteers for this study were drawn from a pool of college students and not from the population at large. Results, therefore, are only be applicable to those college students who would be so inclined as to volunteer for a new online, career developing exercise. In addition, the study was limited to the population of college students.

The low completion rate made the number of participants who completed the project in each group relatively small. A higher number of completed projects would be helpful in exploring a deeper, richer understanding of the implications.

Implications

This project, specifically the online intervention, was a new and different addition to the field of career counseling. While traditional assessments and career exploration tools have found their way online and continue to serve the needs of counselors and clients, this tool represented a departure in that no widely used websites from a narrative theoretical model are currently available. At a time when career counselors are pressed for time and resources to serve growing client demand, the need for accessible, affordable interventions is extremely important. Although many counselors may be interested in more postmodern or narrative approaches to career development, using more traditional tools that are easily accessible may be a necessity. The significant results of this study indicated that creating tools for use by clients from this perspective may provide counselors another tool for working from this new theoretical perspective.

The response to this project by volunteer participants was much higher than expected. Given a potential volunteer pool of approximately 50,000 undergraduate

students, the fact that 719 students created accounts (almost 1.5 percent of the entire potential pool) implied that there is a strong demand on college campuses for this type of career intervention. Whether it was the notion of being able to use the Internet to get career-related assistance, the draw of trying something new, or other factors, it seems clear that students are interested in exploring this type of intervention.

At the same time, the number of students who completed the intervention once they created an account was small. Participants seemed to lose motivation in completing the exercises, even after an incentive for completion was added to the website. Further research could focus on using this intervention in conjunction with other interventions, including specifically individual and group career counseling.

As the population included in this study was limited to college students, the results are particularly applicable to college and university career counselors. By combining the intervention with additional factors to aid in keeping clients motivated (group support, weekly progress checks, or class assignments), the results of this study indicated a significant improvement in career certainty and career indecision could be expected.

Recommendations for Further Study

This study opened a whole new set of research questions for exploration. As mentioned, in terms of the intervention itself, it would be interesting to explore if retention and completion rates would increase if the site was used in conjunction with individual or group counseling. In other words, would clients be more likely to complete the process if they were given the added support of a counselor or a counselor and peer group? In addition, it may be that the introductions were too lengthy or wordy for an online tool. As some participants did little more than create their online account and give

consent for the research, the initial text pages may have been a deterrent. The online intervention could also be adapted to use only postmodern, narrative exercises and activities. While the current project indicated that the combination of traditional and postmodern approaches was successful, it would be helpful to see if narrative activities would stand alone.

Further study could also be done to see how the outcomes of this intervention compare with other career-related online tools. Rather than using control groups and pretest/posttests, further research could focus on comparing outcome measures for this intervention with widely-used assessment instruments such as the Strong Interest Inventory, the Campbell Interest and Skills Survey, or the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator.

The sample populations should be expanded to include both younger and older populations. It would also be interesting to examine the exercises included in the intervention on an individual basis to see if particular exercises were more helpful than others. Removing ineffective exercises may help to reduce the length of the intervention and the incompleteness rate. In addition to the impact on clients, it would also be important to evaluate the perceptions of career counselors as to their impressions of the usefulness of the tool in their own practice. These analyses should include both objective factors such as those measured by the Career Decision Scale (CDS) and subjective factors such as participant satisfaction.

Finally, future research may focus on personal differences that may impact the results or acceptance of the intervention. For example, would this type of intervention be more popular with a particular gender, ethnic group, personality type, or discipline? A much larger group of completed interventions would be required for this level of analysis,

but would provide crucial information for counselors considering the utility of such an intervention.

In summary, this project's results indicated that an online, narrative-based career counseling intervention has positive influence on career certainty and career indecision. Comparison of scores before and after the intervention indicated a significant improvement for participants. In addition, comparisons between the experimental group and the control group indicated a stronger improvement with the intervention. Those participants who received the most intervention by being in the group with both the pretest and the intervention showed the most improvement. As one of the first research projects to examine the utility of this type of intervention, this project opened the door to more research questions including the comparison of this intervention with traditional interventions, study of different populations, and the impact on career counselors and career counseling as a whole.

APPENDIX A
EVALUATION

Welcome To Your Career Story

Evaluation

Please assist us in our effort to improve the quality of our program by taking a moment to answer the following questions. Your responses will be used for evaluation and research purposes only.

1. Overall, please rate this web project:

2. Please rate the usefulness of each of the following activities on a scale from 1 to 5 (with 5 being "VERY USEFUL" and 1 being "NOT USEFUL AT ALL"):

<input type="text"/>	▼	Activity One: Early Memories
<input type="text"/>	▼	Activity Two: Autobiography and/or Timeline
<input type="text"/>	▼	Activity Three: Role Models
<input type="text"/>	▼	Activity Four: What Do I Really Want?
<input type="text"/>	▼	Activity Five: Interests & Genre
<input type="text"/>	▼	Activity Six: Casting Characters
<input type="text"/>	▼	Activity Seven: Themes/ Your Role
<input type="text"/>	▼	Activity Eight: Pulling it All Together

3. How helpful was the web site in encouraging your thinking about your career developing?

4. Would you recommend this web site to other students?

Save and Finish

APPENDIX B ORIGINAL INFORMED CONSENT

Dear Participant:

A doctoral student in the College of Education at the University of Florida named Lisa Severy is researching the effectiveness of a new self-help career web page under the supervision of Dr. Peter Sherrard. The purpose of research is to assess whether a new model of career intervention is helpful to you as you learn more about yourself and the career development and decision making process. By coming to this website, you have indicated interest in participating in this research study.

Your privacy will be given highest priority and the information collected from you will be kept confidential to the extent provided by law. You are not required to answer any questions that you do not wish to answer. By clicking the "I Accept" button below, you are giving us permission to collect data and to report the group results.

The website is self-paced. Some participants will go through the site quickly while others will take the time to complete things over the course of a few weeks.

There are no perceived risks for your participation in this project. Your participation is very important and will add to the knowledge base on career decision making for undergraduate students. Although discomfort resulting from this project is not expected, if there were any, it should be no more uncomfortable than talking about your career issues with a friend, family member, or career counselor. Being given the chance to explore your own career-related issues and processes may also have some positive effects. If you experience any negative feelings as a result of using this tool, you should discuss them with a counselor. Here are some resources for finding a counselor:

- University of Florida Counseling Center (352) 392-1575
- University of Florida Student Mental Health Care (352) 392-1171
- University of Colorado Counseling & Psychological Services (303) 492-6766
- University of Colorado Wardenburg Health Center 303-492-5654

Your participation in this project is entirely voluntary and you may withdraw at any time without penalty of any kind. There is no compensation to you for participating in this study. If you chose not to participate in this research but would still like to explore your career development, you are highly encouraged to contact your campus career services as an alternative.

If you have any questions about this research project, you can call or email Lisa Severy at (720) 890-8863 or LisaSevery@yahoo.com or Dr. Sherrard at (352) 392-0731 or psherrard@coe.ufl.edu. Questions or concerns about your rights as research participant may be directed to the UFIRB office, University of Florida, Box 112250, Gainesville, FL 32611, (352) 392-0433.

Please click "I Accept" if you accept the invitation to participate in this voluntary research project. You should also print a copy of this page for your records. Please click "I Do Not Accept" if you do not want to participate.

APPENDIX C REVISED INFORMED CONSENT

Dear Participant:

A doctoral student in the College of Education at the University of Florida named Lisa Severy is researching the effectiveness of a new self-help career web page under the supervision of Dr. Peter Sherrard. The purpose of research is to assess whether a new model of career intervention is helpful to you as you learn more about yourself and the career development and decision making process. By coming to this website, you have indicated interest in participating in this research study.

Your privacy will be given highest priority and the information collected from you will be kept confidential to the extent provided by law. You are not required to answer any questions that you do not wish to answer. By clicking the "I Accept" button below, you are giving us permission to collect data and to report the group results.

The website is self-paced. Some participants will go through the site quickly while others will take the time to complete things over the course of a few weeks. As an incentive for completing the project, participants who finish before the end of the study will be sent \$10.00.

There are no perceived risks for your participation in this project. Your participation is very important and will add to the knowledge base on career decision making for undergraduate students. Although discomfort resulting from this project is not expected, if there were any, it should be no more uncomfortable than talking about your career issues with a friend, family member, or career counselor. Being given the chance to explore your own career-related issues and processes may also have some positive effects. If you experience any negative feelings as a result of using this tool, you should discuss them with a counselor. Here are some resources for finding a counselor:

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Please click "I Accept" if you accept the invitation to participate in this voluntary research project. You should also print a copy of this page for your records. Please click "I Do Not Accept" if you do not want to participate.

APPENDIX D
TEXT-ONLY VERSION OF ONLINE TOOL

Building Your Collection

“The future is not something we enter. The future is something we create.”
-Leonard I. Sweet

CONGRATULATIONS! If you are struggling with your career decision-making, it means you probably have the luxury of multiple choices. At this point, you are probably bemoaning that fact and wishing that you had fewer things from which to chose! Before you start this process, take time to revel in your options! You are beginning the process of creating your life story and you have so many options for where to take the plot.

It’s like walking into a library with three books one day and the next day finding a library with thousands of volumes to chose between. Sure, the first library makes your choice easier and faster... but you’ll probably get stuck with something you may not really want. In the second library, you’ll have to narrow down your choice by figuring out whether you want to look in mysteries, science fiction, biographies, etc., and then you’ll have to browse various books to make your selection. The process takes much longer, but ultimately, you’ll be more satisfied with your choice.

Let’s take the library analogy one step further. What if, instead of walking into a small or large library, you were part of the planning committee. What if you could help decide what books would line the shelves and how they would be arranged? This would take even more effort than before, but all of your options would be distinctly yours to create.

In this way, you can think of the world of work as a giant library of your creation, filled with collections of satisfying works.

“Everyone is necessarily the hero of his own life story.” -John Barth

So, how do you begin this overwhelming task of stocking your personal library of options? To begin, you’ll need to start thinking about your own story. It is not enough to fill the shelves of your library with the stories of others, you’ll need to begin to write your own.

Think about your favorite book or movie. A good story has a strong plot that keeps it moving. These are the aspects that you can share with other people... “this happened, then this happened, then this happened.” Whether it is a book, movie, or something you are sharing with a friend, the plot of the story is what happened. Obviously, your story began before you were even born. What you chose to tell people about your life experiences as a child, what high school was like, or how you chose a college can be considered the plot of your story up to this point.

Now, think about your favorite book or movie again. The things that make a good story become a great story are the themes that support the plot. These themes are the story underneath the story, the “whys” that keep you discussing the story with friends or thinking about it as you walk home. Themes make us think and give the story meaning.

Activity One: Early Memories

“There is always one moment in childhood when the door opens and lets the future in.”
-Graham Greene

Recognizing that it is difficult to jump right into the middle of a story, this first section is designed to give you insight into the earliest chapters of your life.

Take a deep breath, close your eyes, and think back to the earliest time you can remember. Think of a particular time or incident and try to remember as much as you can about it. When it's fresh in your mind, start typing. Remember that your journal is your own and you do not have to qualify or justify anything you write. Tell the story from beginning to end, noting how you felt, who you were with, where you were, and what happened.

When you are finished with your story, take a short break.

Now, add another couple of paragraphs to your work. How did it feel to write this story? Now that it's done, do you feel happy, sad, disappointed, nostalgic or some other emotion? Would you go back to that time and place if you could? What would you change about the story if you could?

For the final step in this section, scroll through what you've written and pick out all of the adjectives and adverbs. Although you will want to study the entire story, pay particular attention to the way you describe yourself, the situation, and those around you. Type these descriptive words or themes into the space at the bottom of the page. When you read through the list, can you find any themes or repeating patterns? How representative are these in your life? In other words, is this story isolated or does it seem to fit a pattern of how you've often felt or been treated in your life?

These themes are the important foundation for your story. These might be positive identity themes that you would like to fold into your story. On the other hand, they may be things you consider negative that you would like to “fix” or otherwise address in your story. For example, if your story captured a theme of feeling like an outsider, perhaps your new story should include a plot in which you work to find a place where you feel comfortable and included. Remember, as the author of your story, it is completely up to you where you want to take the plot to take you. **DREAM BIG!**

Like other activities in this program, this part is designed to help you carry your experiences, interactions, relationships, and historical perspective into the next chapter of your life.

Activity Two: Picking Up the Continuing Storyline

“There are moments of existence when time and space are more profound, and the awareness of existence is immensely heightened.” -Charles Baudelaire

Like your early recollection story, you have a plethora of personal stories about

your life that can help you to create your future. In our life stories, most of us can point to pivotal moments that somehow helped to change or define who we are. Whether positive or negative, they are plot points in our stories up to this point.

Although all stories have a beginning, as the audience we assume that we are joining the story in the middle. In other words, the characters have a history and we pick the story up at a certain point. Some novels offer prologues, or some background piece that will be important later. When authors think about stories, they often establish a history for the characters and the plot so that the story will be well-developed from the beginning.

This section involves creating a timeline or past history that includes these important plot points that have influenced your story to this point. You can choose just one of the following activities or you can do both.

Life Narrative- Write your autobiography. Be sure to include significant others and the turning points or pivotal moments in your life.

Personal Timeline- Express your creativity by designing your own personal timeline.

Start the day you were born and progress to today. Include your own turning points and defining moments. In addition, include information important to your family or to particularly important times in your generation. For example, you can include your siblings ages at the time of your birth or when they were born on your timeline.

Describe what your parents careers were like or any changes in their career stories in relation to your timeline. You may also want to include important historical events like the September 11th tragedy– anything that helped you to think about, define and become who you are. (This may be difficult to do on the computer and might be easier for you to draw on a piece of paper).

When you are finished with your prologue, think about the situations you've defined as important. What do they have in common? How will they impact you as you move forward? Were these defining moments beyond your control or something you had power over? How can you incorporate these themes into your new story as you progress from here?

Are there any themes in this section that overlap with the themes from your early recollections writing? Any themes that recur within or between activities are especially important to your personal story. You will want to consider how to include them within your next chapter.

Activity Three: Including That Which You Admire

“Whatever your discipline, become a student of excellence in all things. Take every opportunity to observe people who manifest the qualities of mastery. These models of excellence will inspire you and guide you toward the fulfillment of your highest potential.” - Tony Buzan

People have been discussing the merits of role models and mentoring for years now. What we often forget to think about are the underlying connections that help us to feel drawn to that person or feel admiration for them. This section is designed to help you identify people and characters whom you admire and how they will be included in

your story.

First, think about a person that you admire a great deal. This can be someone you know personally or someone famous. Write a paragraph simply describing that person and his or her accomplishments. In a second paragraph, describe what you particularly admire about this person. Would you like to be like this person? Why? What qualities does he or she have that you would like to have, too?

Second, think about your favorite fictional character. This can be someone from a book, movie, play- anyone you'd like. Following the same formula, use the first paragraph to describe the character and the second to write about why you feel particularly drawn or connected to that character.

Like you did in the very first exercise, scroll back and look at all of the adjectives and adverbs you used in your two stories and list them below. When you read through the list, can you find any themes or repeating patterns? How representative are these in your life? In other words, what characteristics of people and characters that you admire seem to keep emerging in your stories? Do any of them match with descriptors on your list from Activity One? Make sure to take particular note of descriptions that keep recurring for you. Those will certainly need to be included in your life story.

By this time, you should have quite a list of the themes, patterns, or descriptors that are important to you. In thinking about your life story, these might be considered life themes. Some people may also think of these as values. In the next section, you'll review a list of defined values and decide which ones you want to include in your story.

Activity Four: What Do I Really Want?

What usually makes or breaks career satisfaction is how closely related the plot of our career story is to our life themes. Career counselors talk about this in the context of Career Values. This section includes a series of common work values.

Step One: Read through the work values and their descriptions. Address each one by clicking the appropriate button. Your options will be YES, NO, or WHATEVER. You should check YES next to the values you definitely want in your job. Check NO for the values you definitely want to avoid. Check WHATEVER next to the ones you really don't care about one way or the other.

	Security	Relatively free from fear of losing your job and income. Little seasonal fluctuations. Demand remains high despite economic fluctuations. Occupation not likely to become obsolete due to technological advances
	Power & Authority	Ability to control the work activities of other people.
	High Income	Income above the amount required for basic necessities, supporting a standard of living above the average. Emphasis on material gain and accumulating money
	Prestige	Being respected and admired because of one's occupation. If people looked up to you, seek your opinions, or your help you are a person with prestige

Leadership	To guide others in their work. Influence a group to work together productively and to accomplish the goals of an organization. Willing to accept responsibility when things go wrong even when you are not at fault.
Recognition	Visible or public acknowledgement for the quality of your work
Helping Others	Contributing to the emotional, physical, and/or educational welfare of people as the main part of your occupation.
Achievement	Mastery of a field, advancement, and personal growth.
Variety	Occupations with different kinds of activities and challenges, frequent change, and interaction with new people on a regular basis.
Academic Learning	Jobs that require reading, lecture, and study to develop core skills.
Decisiveness	Having the power to make decisions regarding people, policies, course of action, etc.
Work Under Pressure	Work involving time or deadline pressures or work closely scrutinized by supervisors or outside constituents.
Excitement	Work that involves a high degree or frequent excitement.
Community	Work that allows you to participate in community affairs.
Tranquility	Jobs that allow you to avoid pressure and competition.
Upward Mobility	Knowing there is opportunity for advancement.
Intellectual Growth/Stimulation	Intellectual stimulation gained from involvement in the abstract aspect of a professional area. Use of mental abilities to investigate, evaluate, and solve problems. Increase in the understanding of and contribution to the knowledge of a field
Creativity	Contribution of your own ideas and judgment, originality, and initiative rather than following the ideas of others.
Enjoyable Colleagues	Working with people with similar interests and activities. Finding colleagues socially enjoyable and compatible.
Challenge	Mastering difficult work and numerous new tasks
Aesthetics	Work involving the appreciation of beautiful things, ideas, etc.

	Accomplishment	Work that creates a feeling of accomplishment, achievement, or contribution.
	Working with Others	Having a close working relationship with a group, and/or daily contact with clients or customers.
	Self-Expression	Being able to communicate your ideas, attitudes, feelings, opinions, or artistic expressions.
	Routine	Having predictable job duties that do not change much. Following a regular schedule and an uncomplicated routine.
	Risk	Working in a situation where pressure, excitement, competition, and adventure exist.
	Physical Challenge	Work requiring physical coordination, agility, or strength.
	Mission	Work that is compatible with your personal values, attitudes and convictions.
	Safety	Working in a situation where risks, danger and stress are minimal, and that is not competitive.
	Close Supervision	Always having supervision available, not being responsible for decision-making.
	Research Work	Work in which you search for and discover new facts and develop ways to apply them.
	Experiential Learning	Jobs that require hands-on, apprenticeship style skill development.
	Working Alone	Work on project independently without significant contact with others.
	Competence	Achieving a level of talent or skill considered “above average” in a certain discipline.
	Research Work	Work in which you search for and discover new facts and develop ways to apply them.
	Influence	Ability to change the attitudes, opinions, and behaviors of other people.
	Persuading	Working in a job in which you personally convince others to take certain actions.
	Autonomy	Working independently, making decisions about and planning your own work.

	Adventure	Work that requires taking risks.
	Competition	Working in a job in which you compete with others directly or indirectly.
	Travel	Working in a job that requires frequent trips.
	Flexible Work Schedule	Working in a job which allows you to choose or set your own schedule. Work hours outside of the standard work day.
	Public Contact	Working in a job where the primary function is to deal directly with the customer.
	Outside Work	Work that involves spending a majority or all of your day outside
	Acceptance	The experience of having all aspects of your personality accepted and appreciated by your colleagues.
	Role Modeling	Serving as an example for your peers in one or all of the following areas: culture, race/ethnicity, religion and sexual orientation
	Balance	The flexibility to balance professional and personal goals (such as family, children, outside interests, etc).
	Pleasing Family	Making a career choice consistent with your family's goals for you.
	Advocacy	Work that involves representing other people or ideas.
	Innovation	Work that invites new theory, methods, or ideas for change.
	Attention to Detail	Jobs requiring focus on small pieces of a whole.
	Expert	Be regarded as a person of high intelligence and experience in a given field.
	Leading Edge	Participating in work advancing current standards of practice or working for an organization that does.

Here are the values that are important for you to have in your story.

Here are the values that you prefer to avoid or specifically leave out of your story.

Now, for the hard part. It would be impossible in one book or one movie to cover all of the themes identified in this exercise. Prioritizing your values is an important step in creating your future. The last step in this exercise is to narrow both lists down to ONE values list with no more than ten values you want to certainly include or certainly avoid. In other words, you may have three things you definitely want and seven things you definitely don't want or any other combination adding up to ten.

Activity Five: Choosing a Genre

“History will be kind to me for I intend to write it.” - Sir Winston Churchill

Hopefully you’ve begun to get an idea in your head about the story you are beginning to write and the underlying themes that you want to express. As you continue to conceptualize what you want to say, you will need to start thinking about how you want to say it. These are the concrete details like settings, characters, and activities that will progress the plot forward and allow you to express those themes. In a way, this is like choosing the genre for your story.

This section focuses on establishing the genre for your story. Career counselors have traditionally focused on interests and skills. In other words, if you are interested in the content or setting of the job, then you will be satisfied and successful there— you will achieve a good person to position fit. In general, settings and tasks are divided into six or seven categories. Choosing the tasks and setting in which you want your story to take place is important for the narrative.

The following section includes general descriptions of seven potential story genres. Read through each one and then rank order them in terms of their appeal for your story setting.

Adventure ~ Adventure stories share an underlying interest in physical activity and hands-on participation. These stories occur in many settings including military, sports, and law enforcement. Characters in these plots have a desire to test limits and to express themselves physically rather than verbally. Adventure plots tend to focus on action. Some popular adventure stories would include *Van Helsing, Master and Commander, Troy, Spiderman, The Chronicles of Riddick, Tomb Raider* and *Fear Factor*.

Altruistic ~ Altruistic stories share an underlying interest in helping other people. These stories occur in many settings from health care to education/teaching to religion and spirituality. Characters in these plots share a genuine concern for the safety, well-being, and growth of others. These stories tend to focus on relationships and healing. Some popular altruistic stories would include *Good Will Hunting, ER, Fried Green Tomatoes, Mr. Holland’s Opus*.

Creative ~ Creative stories focus on the arts and entertainment. These stories may involve theater, dance, music, or other forms of artistic expression. These settings tend to include a heavy emphasis on aesthetics— the look of the piece is as important as the content. Self-expression and the appreciation for individual differences are highly valued. Some popular creative stories would include *Moulin Rouge, Trading Spaces, Queer Eye for the Straight Guy, Shrek* and *Frida*.

Hand’s On~ Hand’s On stories focus on activities with concrete outcomes. These stories occur in many settings such as work with natural resources, agriculture, or mechanical activities. Hand’s on people tend to like working independently to see their work through to its natural conclusion. Some popular hand’s on stories would include *American Chopper, BattleBots, This Old House, Days of Thunder*, and many nature shows on the Discovery channel.

Influential ~ Influential stories focus on the application of power and influence in regards to other people. These stories include business, politics, law, and the ways in which they interact with human relationships. People interested in influential stories generally like leadership roles and are interested in how to move other people to their points of view. Some popular influential stories include *West Wing*, *Law & Order*, *The Manchurian Candidate*, and *Fahrenheit 9/11*.

Organized~ Organized stories emphasize planning and control. These stories may involve many supporting roles and behind-the-scenes influences such as computer simulations and systems engineering as well as roles wherein people provide assistance to others. Characters in these settings tend to work independently to influence outcomes through steady and consistent attention to detail. Some popular organized stories include *The Net*, *Clean Sweep*, *Hackers*, *The Matrix*, *War Games*, and *Sneakers*.

Scientific ~ Scientific stories focus on the intellectual pursuit of answers to all types of questions. Through research and analysis, scientists look to solve mysteries through attention to detail and rigor. In addition to laboratory and medical work, these settings also include detective work, mathematics, and theoretical/philosophical pursuits. Some popular scientific stories include *CSI*, *A Beautiful Mind*, *ER*, *Crossing Jordan*, *The Fly*, and many stories on the Discovery Health Channel.

As you can see from the examples listed in each genre, there are many stories that cross genres or include aspects of both. For example, many mysteries include both the scientific and the adventurous. Taking your top two or three genres, are their ways in which you can combine them to create a setting you would prefer? In the space below, rank order your top three genre choices.

Activity Six: Casting Your Characters

“It is well to remember that the entire universe, with one trifling exception, is composed of others.” -John Andrew Holmes

Very rarely do people create stories that don't involve other characters. Even one-actor plays generally involve that one person playing multiple characters. Traditional career development theories, however, tend to ask people to make decisions independent of the other people in their lives. There are two aspects of your supporting cast that you will need to figure out. You will need to decide who should be included in your cast of characters and what role they will play in your narrative.

First, make a list of all of the important characters in your life. Be sure to include everyone from the people you interact with daily to those who may have only slight influence. Most of these roles have already been cast, but remember also to include roles that have not been cast but that you expect to fill, such as children or significant others.

After you have your list of characters, go back choose five that you want to consider more carefully (eventually, you'll want to think about everyone, but narrowing down will help you get started). Write a paragraph or two about each of these five

people. Include the following information:

What is his or her professional identity?

What are the underlying themes of his or her personal story?

How will his or her themes interact with yours? In other words, have you inherited expectations or themes from someone else? What do other significant people in your lives want for you or from you?

What will your story mean to this person? As you create your career narrative, how much impact will your decision have on this person?

On a scale of 1-10, with 10 being the highest, how much influence will this person have on the authoring of your life story? Will they be an advisor, an editor, or a co-author? How do you feel about that?

Now that you've spent some time thinking about your themes, the setting in which you'd like your story to take place, and some of the characters with whom you'll interact, you need to think more about the main character, the protagonist, the hero....YOU! The next section will help you to start thinking about your role.

Activity Seven: What Role Will You Play?

“All the world's a stage, and all the men and women merely players. They have their exits and their entrances; and one man in his time plays many parts.”

-William Shakespeare

If you've ever received an email quiz to determine what animal you're like, what Muppet character you most resemble, or what role you'd play in a medieval society, you've learned a little something about archetypes. Carl Jung is the theorist most identified with archetypes, but many people have discussed the premise. The basic idea is that there are common roles humans play that recur across cultures and across generations. For example, Jung described a mother archetype as someone who nurtures, comforts, and provides for the needs of others. Others have described archetypes as prototypes or models that tend to recur.

While most “type” theorists agree that individual differences account for a great deal of human behavior, the basic premise is that people of similar types will display similar behaviors. We use common descriptions of types of people to organize what we know about the world. For example, in high school, were you the Brain, the Jock, the Musician, the Geek, the Rebel? When people use these descriptions to talk about people, they hope to provide lots of information while saying very little. This works because it evokes stereotypes or constructions of what these types of people are like.

Traditional career development tools ask many multiple-choice questions to help you to uncover your archetype. As this web site encourages you to define yourself and write your own story, this exercise is designed to help you write a story to describe your type.

Use your imagination to dream about a tribal community. This could be on an island somewhere or perhaps in a different period in history. The focus of the tribe is on daily living and survival. In this tribal community, what role would you play? What would be your contribution to the overall functioning of the tribe? Write a story about the tribal community and your role within it.

Whatever career field you choose to enter, connecting your archetype or tribal

role within your job will help your plot or career to be more aligned with your underlying theme. Within the different genres you are considering, your basic role will remain the same no matter what industry or career field you choose. Keep this role in mind when you are considering what your plot will be in your next chapter. What you are doing (your plot), should be consistent with your role.

Activity Eight: ACTION!

“Success is not the result of spontaneous combustion. You must set yourself on fire.”
-Reggie Leach

By working with this web site so far, you’ve explored, elaborated, and created numerous aspects of your story. As you continue to author the next chapter in your life, you’ll need to start integrating those various pieces. Hopefully you’ve begun to see themes emerging that cross the different activities. In order to determine where the plot is heading, you’ll need to tie these themes together.

Like any good story, activity and action is what keeps the plot moving forward. It is not enough to be well grounded, you have to DO something and interact with the world. Work is the way that most of us interact with the world. How many times have you been asked what your major is or what you do? What we do is our main connection to others and a defining aspect of our lives.

Here is a summary of what you’ve found and reported so far:

Themes

Values

Genre

Characters

Role

Consider this list of things to include in your story. What’s missing? Is there some difficulty or obstacle that will keep you from putting this story into action? What will have to take place between now and then for you to reach your goals?

While you won’t always be able to plan and account for the difficulties or obstacles that will provide challenges for you, you can be prepared to deal with both the good and bad opportunities presented to you. Think about what you will need (strengths) to accomplish your goals and what you need to address before you can move forward (challenges).

You are almost there! You now have many of the elements you’ll need to craft an exciting and fulfilling story. The next section will help you figure out where to go from here and how to get started!

Epilogue: Where Do You Go From Here?

“There are many ways of going forward, but only one way of standing still.”

-Franklin D. Roosevelt

All of the work that you’ve completed up to this point can help you in writing the next chapter of your career story. Before you jump straight into living that story, however, you’ll want to try different aspects of the narrative first. Think of this as running your movie by a test audience. Practically speaking, do you want to write a whole novel without testing the basic premise first?

In order to figure out where to go from here, you’ll need to do more research on the world of work. Like all good writing, the more accurate the information, the more believable the story. Now that you know what your needs are, what genre you want to meet those needs within, and what characters you want to include along the way, you have to figure out what career fields will fit into the story. Most of us get our information about careers from two story sources— people we know and the media. While these are important sources of information, they may not be complete or, quite frankly, accurate. As with any other type of decision-making, the more sources of information you have, the better off you’ll be. Here are some suggestions for getting more career-related information.

Career Center Library & Information Centers. Most colleges and universities, as well as some communities, offer career centers with printed information about careers.

Internet. There are numerous sites on the web that can be helpful including career information pages, professional association pages, and company websites.

Informational Interviews. Find people within the fields you are considering and interview them.

Once you’ve made a tentative decision that you think will meet your career narrative needs, test your choice by implementing it. Short-term commitments like internships, externships, co-ops, and part-time jobs will help you to evaluate whether or not your plot is connected to your universal themes. You will be most satisfied and successful if you find meaning in your career. Connecting who you are with what you do (your themes with your plot) will help you to do that.

Hopefully this web site has helped you to summarize your thoughts, explore what is important to you, and feel comfortable in authoring the next chapter in your life. Like any great work of art, your story will not always be an easy one to write. You’ll have editors influencing your plot and unforeseen circumstances that move you in different directions. Changing your plot, while staying connected to your themes, will help your story to grow and change with you throughout your life.

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Lisa Severy has been director of Career Services at the University of Colorado, Boulder since August of 2003. She came to Colorado from the Career Resource Center at the University of Florida where she had been serving since 1996. During her tenure at UF, she held various career counseling positions including the Assistant Director for Diversity Programs, the Assistant Director for Graduate Services, and the Associate Director for Career Development.

Lisa has a degree in psychology from Indiana University and graduate degrees in counselor education from the University of Florida. She is a Nationally Certified Counselor, Licensed Mental Health Counselor in Florida, and a Licensed Professional Counselor in Colorado. She is also recognized by the National Career Development Association (NCDA) as a Master Career Counselor and a Clinical Supervision Provider in Florida. She is a member of the American College Personnel Association (ACPA) and the American Counseling Association (ACA) as well as NCDA. Since moving to Colorado, she has become active in regional associations becoming the co-chair for training and president-elect with the Colorado Career Development Association (CCDA), and president of the Collegiate Career Services Association of Colorado and Wyoming (CCSA). She is an active presenter at both the local and national levels.

In 1998, Lisa received the Outstanding Practitioner & Supervisor of the year from Chi Sigma Iota, International Counseling & Academic Honorary, awarded at the ACA National Conference in San Diego. In 2001, she was awarded the National Association

for Colleges and Employers (NACE) Excellence in Educational Programming for the Cultural Diversity Reception.

Lisa's primary areas of research include postmodern career development theory, group career counseling, career development issues for graduate students, gender issues in the workplace, and multiculturalism. Her article entitled, "What's the Story? Postmodern Career Counseling in Student Affairs," appeared in the *Journal of College Student Development* in 2002 and a co-authored article entitled "Creating Connections: Using a Narrative Approach in Career Group Counseling with College Students from Diverse Cultural Backgrounds" appeared in the *Journal of College Counseling* in 2004. She recently completed a book with Jack and Phoebe Ballard entitled *Turning Points: Finding Meaning & Purpose in an Uncertain World*.